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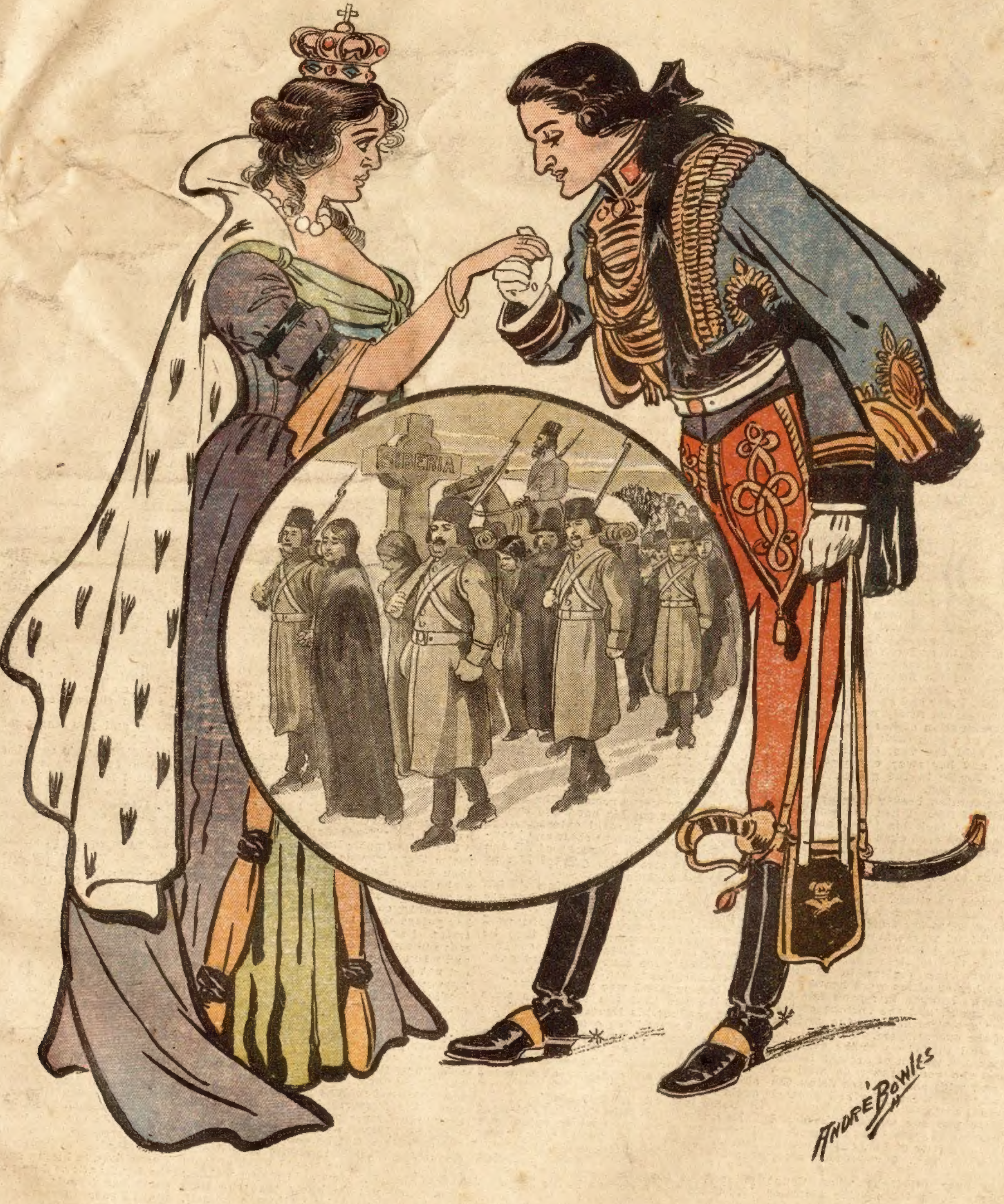
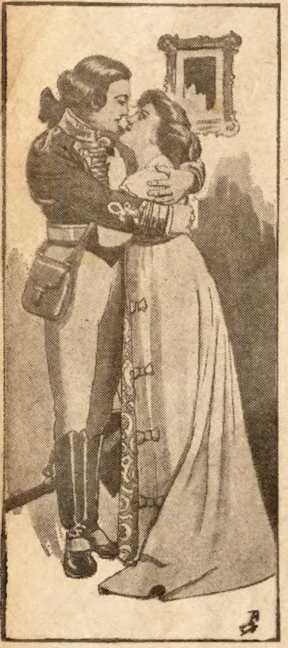

SIBERIA
ANDRE BOWLES

"I am the Empress of Russia!"

(See "The Palace of Doom," on next page.)

The Palace of Doom

Or, The Passion of an Empress - By Hugh Hamilton



"My love!" cried Paul.

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CHAPTER I.

LOVE AND FATE.

IN ALL Russia there was no handsomer man than Gregory Orloff. The acknowledged favorite of the Great Empress Catherine, a man of commanding presence, he had been next to the imperial throne for years. He possessed a lion's strength and a fox's cunning, and those whom he hated went to Siberia at the crook of his finger, or vanished forever in the dark oubliettes of the fortress of St. Peter and Paul.

Catherine, seated firmly on the throne by the assassination of her husband, the Czar Peter, of which dark deed she was cognizant, held the vast empire in her iron grip, and her sway extended from the White Arctic to the golden waters of the Caspian Sea.

This Pomeranian beauty had lovers in every walk of life. When one was dismissed another took his place, and she had heaped upon each such golden favors that the realm groaned beneath the burden, and the poorest farmers were taxed to extortion to supply the needs of her Romeos.

She brooked no rivals. More than one who had smiled upon her favorites had been packed off to the frozen North, into white deathland where hope never came and where the gilded palace was exchanged for the lightless mines.

Men spoke her praises in trumpet tones, but her cruelties were heard only in whispers. Many a fair back felt the merciless knout, and the shrieks of her enemies were drowned in the wolfish snarls of the executioners.

Yet, for all this she was the greatest of empresses, a patron of art and literature, and she could fawn as well as punish, and with smiling face drink the health of those whom she had doomed to perpetual exile.

But there was one woman who dared to love against the wishes of this modern Messalina, and it is of her, the beautiful Xenia Carloff, that our present story shall deal.

It was near midnight when Count Orloff came down the marble steps of his palace on the Moika and paused for a moment on the lower stones. The street was full of gay equipages, for a lot of merrymakers were returning from a ball at the Carloff palace. The beautiful Xenia had given a brilliant function, and her guests were chanting her praises on the way home.

The favorite of the Empress remained on the steps till the great bell of St. Isaac's tolled the midnight hour.

"I wonder what the Empress would say if she were here," he suddenly muttered, as a richly caparisoned team dashed by. "Daroski is in the meshes, or my eyes deceive me. The fair Xenia has him fairly ensnared, and Catherine can grind her teeth in vain. There are beautiful spots in Siberia; yes, and some pretty dungeons in St. Petersburg, but the fly is in the silken web all the same."

By this time the carriage of the young Major Paul Daroski was out of sight, and Orloff twisted his mustache with a laugh.

In less than a half hour the carriage drew up in front of a commodious house on the Neva Prospect, and a handsome young officer wearing the uniform of the Imperial Guard, alighted. He ran up the broad steps and disappeared beyond the door.

"It was a grand time!" cried he, throwing his hat to a valet who awaited him. "I am surfeited with love, Riga. Bring me iced wine. It may cool my blood," and he threw himself upon a couch and waved a hand of dismissal.

When the valet had vanished Paul plucked a boutonnierre from his coat and pressed it to his lips. In another moment the man returned bearing glasses on a silver tray.

"I had almost forgotten, master," said he, glancing at Daroski. "A letter came for you."

"Where is it, varlet?" demanded the young officer.

Riga produced a missive, which he extended to his master on bended knees. Daroski glanced at the superscription and turned pale.

"Leave me alone!" cried he, and the servant instantly took his leave.

With fingers that shook a little the officer broke the seal and read the contents of the letter in silence.

"God of Heaven!" rang from his lips which grew whiter than ever. "This woman is as merciless as a Semiramis. What care I for her? There is but one woman in all the world for me, and I have just left her adored presence. I cannot love this haughty creature. She has Orloff. She must not press me too far. I see in this letter the beginning of dark times. If she is inflamed against Xenia, who has won my love, the girl is in danger."

He sprung to his feet and began to pace the apartment like a caged tiger. His face flushed and grew white by turns. His body now and then shook with emotion. He almost spilled the wine which he lifted to his lips. It trickled over his white bosom.

"She wants to see me tonight," he went on, looking once more at the letter which he had cast upon the table with a gesture of disgust. "She of all women, the most powerful in the world and the most insatiate. And I dare not disobey."

He drained the glass to the very lees and picked up his hat. In a few moments he was flying toward the Winter Palace, lying back among the cushions with his hands clinched and his teeth set. The guards drew off at sight of him, and he plunged into the great building.

The Empress Catherine had not retired, but was waiting for him in one of the most gorgeous rooms. The sentry at the door put out his hand and swung the portal wide. Daroski entered.

Seated in a magnificent chair and beautifully clad was the Empress of all the Russias. A warm smile greeted him as he made his obeisance.

"Arise!" commanded Catherine. "I am glad to see you, my dear Major, but are you not a little late?"

"I came, your majesty, as soon as I received your commands," and then he instantly saw his mistake.

"But they were sent two hours ago," said Catherine.

"Unfortunately I was not at home."

Did he see that the blue eyes were almost reading his inmost soul?

"Come, I must have a confession," the Empress went on with a forced smile. "You have been to an entertainment."

"I have your majesty," answered Daroski. "It was an engagement which I could not well break."

Some love affair, no doubt?"

He knew it would be useless to attempt to deceive the woman whose spies were legion. Those who had tried it had never repeated the deception.

"I have been to a ball at the Carloff palace," he confessed.

If there was a change in the Empress' looks he did not catch it.

"The Countess Xenia gives frequent balls," said she. "This one was brilliant, Major?"

"Quite in keeping with the others."

"And the Countess was lovely?"

"She was herself."

Daroski knew he was treading on thin ice. One more step and the cold waters of fate would engulf him.

"My dear Major," Catherine went on in her suavest manner, "I have sent for you to bestow upon you a high honor."

"Upon an unworthy servant, your majesty!" he stammered, and tried to look away, but there was no getting beyond the range of those wonderful eyes.

"I am going to create you colonel: not only this, but you shall be decorated with the Order of the Iron Eagle."

"It is too much!" cried Daroski. "I have not deserved such favors at the hands of my Empress."

"Aye, but you have," continued Catherine. "Those whom I favor must have no unworthy loves."

The young officer felt his cheeks grow pale.

'You pledge me that it shall be thus with you?" Catherine resumed. "There are yet higher honors in store for you, my dear Major. I am the Empress of Russia."

"And the greatest ruler in all the world!"

The Empress drew towards her a jeweled box and opened it before him. He saw therein the Order of the Iron Eagle, and its brilliants flashed in the light.

"Give me time to think," he exclaimed. "You overwhelm me with surprise, your majesty. I am stunned."

"What! do you refuse my benefactions?"

"I can refuse my Empress nothing," stammered the white-faced man.

"I will give you time to think," she went on. "Take until tomorrow noon. But beware, Major. No love-making meantime. My wishes are commands. You may go."

With the old smile on her face she waved her hand, and Paul Daroski fell back, bowing. He left Catherine's presence with the best grace he could assume; he wanted to get away. His blood, which a moment before had seemed ice, now burned in every vein.

He was loved by the greatest ruler in the world. He knew what the proffered honors meant. He would have to give up Xenia Carloff; he would have to become the paid favorite of Catherine, like Orloff and others who had basked in her smiles. But that was not all. If he refused, Xenia was in danger. The dungeons of the fortress and the bleak wilds of Siberia stared her in the face. Catherine was merciless.

Paul Daroski thought of all this as he rushed out into the night. He did not feel the snow in his face or see the guards at the door; but rushed on and on with love and terror in his soul.

CHAPTER II.

THE MAN FROM SIBERIA.

THERE were thousands of nobly born people in Russia who would have emptied their veins to have been even smiled upon by the Great Empress. Not so Paul Daroski.

He had given his love to the young Countess Xenia, and in return had received her adoration. That was happiness enough for him. Therefore, when he had fathomed the Empress's designs, and he could read them in the light of past events, his heart sank within him.

For himself he cared little. He could secretly quit the realm, and in some other country find an abode, but the shadow of Catherine's hatred already hovered over Xenia Carloff.

She was of noble lineage. In the whole realm there was no family more exalted than hers. Her ancestors had helped to make Russian history; they had helped to carry the banners of the great empire to mighty conquests, and the walls of her palace were adorned with their portraits. Her beauty was realm-wide. She was known as the Lily of St. Petersburg, and when she gave her heart to Paul she did not dream that she was crossing the woman who was her sovereign.

When Paul Daroski found himself some distance from the Winter Palace, with Catherine's last words ringing in his ears like the toll of a bell of doom, a shiver passed over his frame. He had trenched upon forbidden ground. He now knew that one could not love without Catherine's permission, that one's heart was not really one's own, especially when the Empress had set eyes upon that unlucky person.

His first impulse was to proceed to the Carloff palace, but he could not think of disturbing Xenia's thoughts with doomful tidings. No, he would fight off this terror himself. He would play a waiting game, and yet he knew that the time had been limited by Catherine herself, that by high noon on the next day he would have to decide between Empress and love.

He ordered his servant to drive him home. Entering his abode he almost staggered up the steps, and in another moment had thrown himself upon a couch.

Scarcely had he done so when footsteps sounded in the corridor without, and Paul roused himself and listened. The door opened softly, and a young girl stole in. She stopped suddenly at sight of Daroski and drew back, but his voice reassured her.

"Come on, Ariel," said Paul, in kindly tones, and the young thing advanced again.

"Some one has been waiting for you, master," said the girl. "He is in the guest room."

"When did he come?" asked Paul.

"Scarce an hour ago."

"Who is he, girl?"

"I do not know," was the reply. "I think he is disguised, and——"

"I'll see," interrupted the young Major, and rising, he hurried from the room.

The guestroom was a little square chamber at the end of the corridor, and Paul soon threw wide the door. A man with a long beard was seated on a couch, but at sight of the master of the premises he sprang to his feet.

"I am back," were his first words, in excited tones, which only accentuated Daroski's stare.

"That is evident, admitting that you have been away," the young soldier answered. "Who are you?"

The next instant the visitor's hand flew to his face and his beard fluttered to the floor.

"Ivan Panine!" cried Paul.

"What the mines have spared," was the reply. "My dear Paul, you see the shadow of the man who went to Siberia at the command of the Semiramis of the North."

Paul glanced behind him, and seeing that the door stood slightly ajar, hastened to close it.

"We can talk now," said he, taking the outstretched hands. "I welcome you back, my dear Ivan."

"The only person in St. Petersburg who has the courage to speak such words," said Panine, bitterly, yet with deep feeling. "I have come back into the shadow of fate to help you. It is all because of a dream in the mines. In the night I heard the words: 'Go to Paul! Go to Paul!' and from that hour I tugged at my bitter leash till here I am. Siberia has sucked my blood drop by drop, but it has not stolen my brain. Since I crossed the frontier of my beloved Russia, I have felt new life seething through every vein. I am young again, though my mirror shows me a man old before his time. You are in trouble, Paul?"

Young Daroski drew his friend to a chair and took another beside him. "I am in trouble," said he, looking into Panine's face. I have the misfortune to be loved by the Great Catherine."

"Ah!"

"I have just come from the imperial presence. I have heard words that admit of but one interpretation."

"I see. She wants you near her, Paul?"

"That is it. She offered to decorate me with the Order of the Iron Eagle."

"Just as the reptile decorated Yusof, who was thrown aside when her love cooled."

"Yes, and you know what became of Yusof?"

"He died by his own hand in Warsaw, because Catherine robbed him of the beautiful Elizabeth, whom he adored."

"You are right, Ivan, and now I am asked to give up the woman I love for the smiles of my Empress."

Panine looked into Paul's face for a moment wrapped in silence.

"And if you refuse the commands of Catherine, her wrath will fall not upon you but upon the beautiful lady?"

"Upon Xenia."

Panine started.

"Then it is the Countess Xenia whom you love?" cried he.

"Xenia Carloff," was the reply.

"Paul," said Ivan, "we must circumvent this woman. Has she not Gregory Orloff? Paul, Paul, it is your stature and your face that have thrown the net about you."

"I know that. I will scar my face. I will hack off an arm——"

"No," put in Ivan Panine. "Though I know Xenia will love you even though you are maimed, she must have you a whole man despite the machinations of this Pomeranian tigress."

Paul breathed hard.

"They do not yet know that I am in St. Petersburg," continued the fugitive from Siberia, "although my escape is out. I have been in hiding ever since I crossed the icy frontier. The poorest wretch on earth has friends, you know. This very night I passed Gregory Orloff and caught his stern eye for a moment, but the shadows saved me. The next hour I almost stumbled upon the great Potemkin, but I eluded that fat lout. I have been waiting for a chance to see you, Paul, and thank Heaven I am here."

"But what can you do to help me?" inquired Daroski.

"What but thwart the wiles of Catherine?"

Paul looked at the man beside him and was inclined to laugh.

"You think, Paul, that a poor fugitive from the white North is powerless in this net of power. I can read your inmost soul. Where is the Countess Xenia?"

"I left her but a short time ago in her palace."

"And you have not seen her since your audience with the Empress?"

"I came straight from the Imperial Palace here."

"Good! Catherine will wait till tomorrow noon for your decision?"

"Such is her promise."

Ivan Panine arose and paced the room.

"This drives the blood with old time fury through my body!" he exclaimed, halting suddenly before Paul. "What do I now owe this creature who wields the scepter? Aye, what do I not owe her for five years of death in life under the ground where no light comes and where the soul is worn out inch by inch till it is a nonentity? See, Paul. I am not helpless. I know the way into the Imperial Palace. What armed guard can stop Ivan Panine?"

The returned exile had drawn a long dagger from beneath his coat, and Paul saw that he clutched it with the energy of eternal hatred.

"No!" he cried, laying his hand upon Panine's arm. "This woman is too great to die. She is really the world's mistress, Ivan."

"But a merciless one!" cried Panine, with stiffening lips.

"I know."

"If she lives, Paul, it is farewell to life with Xenia."

Daroski's chin dropped upon his bosom.

"You will refuse the Iron Eagle tomorrow?" questioned Ivan.

"Think you I will give up Xenia Carloff?"

"You speak like a man, Paul!" cried Panine. "You are no coward, I see."

"There are no cowards in our house."

"Let me think, Paul. My brain is working again after the long slavery at the North. It is past midnight now. I will go back to my retreat. I will think out deliverance."

"I thank you a thousand times, Ivan. I often wondered what ever became of you."

"I simply vanished," said Panine, gritting his teeth. "I was put into a sleigh, and over the wastes of snow I went. For what? Because I had made a verse which Catherine did not like. Yes, let me think it all out."

"And you will come back?"

"In the morning."

When Ivan Panine reached the street a man stepped out from the shadows of the house. He had the tread of the Siberian wolf. He centered his keen eyes upon the fugitive, and when Ivan started off he had a subtle tracker at his heels.

CHAPTER III.

THE BLOW FALLS.

THE beautiful Countess Xenia Carloff, whose spacious palace stood on the banks of the Neva, was truly the Lily of St. Petersburg. Rich and winsome, she was known everywhere, and despite family pride she was worshiped by all for her many deeds of charity. Her father had been one of Russia's most famous soldiers and, dying, had bequeathed her his illustrious name and widespreading possessions.

More than one young noble had looked upon her with eyes of love, but from the train of her adorers she had chosen the handsome Paul Daroski, upon whom she lavished her affections. The Empress Catherine had discovered this love affair, and having set her heart upon gaining Paul for herself, had determined that Xenia should never call him her own.

From that moment the young Countess was in danger, for Catherine had never been balked in her love-making. She had crushed more than one rival, and when she saw that Paul had captured the Lily of St. Petersburg, rage swelled in her bosom. She believed in secret that, despite the allurements of the throne, the handsome Major would not give up his love, and she set about at once to triumph over her rival.

The hours of the next day after the interview at the Imperial Palace dragged slowly along. Catherine was outwardly calm, but in her heart there was a raging sea of passion. She watched the clock unceasingly. Would the hour of noon never come?

At the appointed time Paul Daroski alighted in front of the palace and tripped up the guarded steps. He was shown at once into the royal presence. Catherine tried to read his decision in his looks, but gave up the task in a few moments.

"I am glad you have come, my dear Major," said the Empress, with one of her fascinating smiles. "I have been waiting with impatience for your decision."

There was no dropping of the eyes on the young soldier's part. He looked the great woman squarely in the face.

"I feel deeply the proffered honor, your majesty," he answered in his musical tones. "I have tried in every way to be obedient to your commands, but I must decline promotion and the Iron Eagle."

There was a perceptible start on the Empress's part and her gaze for a moment sought the wall behind her subject.

"What stands between you and the acceptance?" she asked.

"Much, your majesty."

"You will not be sent upon foreign service."

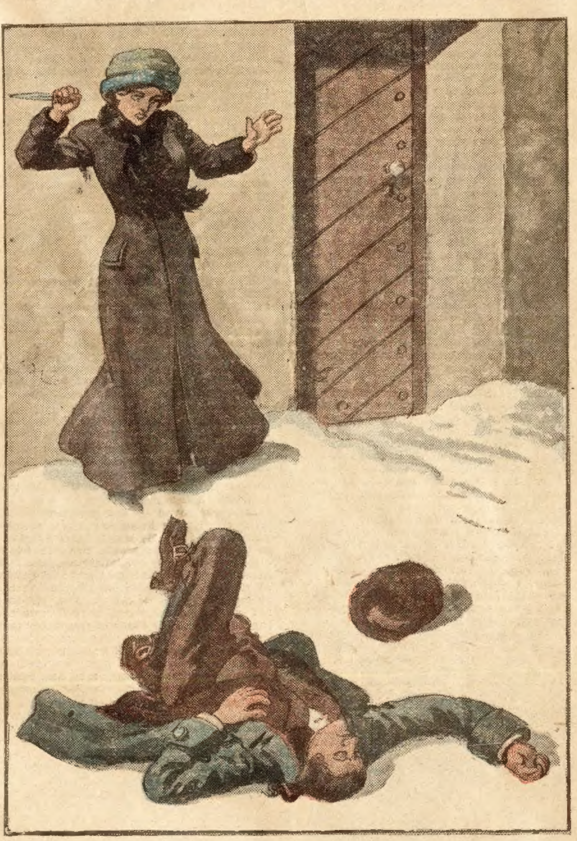
"I care little for that."

"You will be attached to the palace——"

"It would be both a pleasure and an honor to be near my Empress," answered Daroski.

"Then why the refusal?"

Catherine's face had grown suddenly white.



The next moment he had fallen almost at her feet.

"If you will permit me to make a confession, your majesty, I will say that my marriage day is approaching and——"

"Your marriage day?" broke in the Empress, flushing with little veiled astonishment.

"Yes, your majesty. I am soon to take unto myself a wife."

"Ah! And upon whom have you bestowed your affections?"

"I have won the hand of the Countess Carloff."

Under her mask of deception Catherine was trying to conceal her burning anger, but the attempt was a sorry failure.

"Very well," said she. "I regret that you have refused to receive the honors I have sought to bestow upon you. I shall find a worthier subject, my dear Major," and Catherine imperiously waved her hand in a gesture of dismissal.

There was nothing left for Paul to do but to betake himself from the presence of the Empress. He saw that it was not the end of the affair. He had looked into the soul of the woman on the throne, and saw beneath the mask the hatred of the whelp-robbed tigress. Bowing his way out, he went down the broad steps and out into the winter sunlight.

The guards looked askance at him and turned upon him the cold shoulder. These men who a moment before were ready to fall at his feet now regarded him in the light of a poor mujik who had been kicked out of the palace.

No sooner had he departed than Catherine sprang to her feet and began to pace the room with clinched hands and swelling veins. Her mein was terrible to behold.

"The dog refuses my love!" she hissed. "The animal turns from the adoration of his Empress, but wait! I have dungeons and Siberia. I have the knout for fair backs, and as I live I will make the Carloff palace a veritable Palace of Doom."

She flew from wall to wall in a passion. A lapdog that fawned at her feet was kicked away and fell whining near the wall.

Meantime Paul was far from the scene. Not long thereafter he mounted the steps of Xenia's abode and was gladly received.

The Lily of St. Petersburg looked lovelier than ever. She welcomed her lover in a sweet voice, but started when she perceived the cloud on his face.

"My love," cried Paul, taking her to his heart, "the cloud is gathering!"

She drew off and looked at him speechless and wondering.

"What clouds can gather?" she asked, in a low voice. "Yes, I ask what clouds can come to darken our sky?"

He drew her to a rich divan and told the story of his adventures to which she listened with blanched cheeks.

"Can it be possible?" she exclaimed. "Is not Count Orloff the favorite of the Empress at this moment?"

"Aye, but he is likely to receive a command to 'travel.' He will be loaded with wealth and sent upon a journey."

"To make room for another? I see," cried Xenia. "But I am not going to lose you, Paul?"

"Not until you drive me away, dear."

"Which you know I will never do," was the impassioned reply. "I was never happy till you crossed my path, and since that day I have lived in paradise."

For a moment they sat in silence; then Xenia arose.

"Paul," she suddenly cried, "this means the vengeance of the Great Empress!"

"I care not if that vengeance is directed against me alone," he replied. "I am young and strong. There are other countries than Russia."

"Yes, the world is wide, dear Paul."

"But her revenge will fall upon you."

A little color departed from the young girl's cheeks.

"I fear not for myself," the soldier continued. "I have roused all the passions of this woman. She is the most powerful ruler in the world. She has dungeons and Siberia at her command, and——"

"Why should I fear them when I have your love?" put in Xenia.

"A love which no sceptered hand shall dissolve. But let us talk of happier things. Let us look at a future of our own coloring. I have a friend who has just come back from the terror land of Siberia, one fertile in expedients. Ivan Panine has returned."

"Ivan, the poet?" cried Xenia.

"Yes, he is even now in hiding in St Petersburg, and he has promised to help us."

"But he will soon be ferreted out," said the Countess.

"Ivan is resourceful," answered Paul "I saw him last night. His disguise is perfect."

"And the spies of Catherine are sharp-eyed," cried Xenia, with shuddering fear.

Once more Paul led her from the contemplation of the dark subject, and for some moments they did not return to it.

The day waned drearily. More than once after Paul's departure Xenia went to the window and looked out upon the wide thoroughfare. She heard the great clock in St. Isaac's tower strike the hours, and dreaded to see the night come.

It was ten o'clock when she saw a sleigh pull up in front of the palace. She recoiled from the window with a spasm of fear and suppressed a cry. The trappings of the horses told her that the vehicle belonged to the royal stables.

Up the steps lightly tripped a stalwart young hussar, his sword jingling on the stones, and Xenia drew back into the shadows and held her breath. Recovering with a supreme effort, she descended the stair and entered a sumptuously furnished apartment on one side of the lower hall. The door almost immediately opened.

"Colonel Prejenski!" announced a servant.

"I will see the Colonel," answered Xenia, and the young officer entered.

He stopped at sight of the young Countess and took a folded paper from his bosom. Xenia at once caught sight of the royal seal that dangled from the document.

"A message from her imperial majesty," said Prejenski. "Shall I read it, lady?"

Xenia bowed stiffly.

"It is the wish of her imperial highness, Catherine, Empress of all the Russias," read Prejenski, in a clear voice," "that the Countess Carloff remain within her palace during the Empress's pleasure, receiving no visitors during that time."

Xenia did not speak. The blow had fallen!

CHAPTER IV.

URSUS.

ALMOST immediately thereafter there appeared at the Carloff palace, to be known henceforward as the Palace of Doom, a giant Cossack who was called Ursus. He was a man who towered head and shoulders above his fellows, a bear-like personage, who had passed through many campaigns for the great Empress. He came in full uniform and took his station on the steps, where he soon became a prominent figure.

Those who passed that way did not wonder, for Catherine was a woman of fiery impulses, and those who glanced at the guard concluded that Xenia had fallen under the royal displeasure.

The Countess Carloff saw the statuesque sentry and drew back among the curtains. She was a prisoner within her own abode. Well acquainted with the faithfulness of the Cossacks, she did not for a moment think that Ursus could be bribed. He looked neither to the right nor the left, but stood at "attention" and seemed glued to the stones. Midnight came and he had not moved an inch.

It was not long before news of his service began to be circulated throughout the city. The curious drove past the palace just to have the news confirmed, and it was confirmed with an emphasis that startled them.

Among those who went that way was a girl dressed as one of the lower orders. She was pretty and petite, with large blue eyes, and in the circles where she moved she was known as Dreva. She stopped in the street a few feet from the immovable Ursus and stared at him. The big fellow paid her no attention, and presently she turned on her heel and ran away.

Twenty minutes later she burst into a room in which sat a man to whom she ran with a look of fear still in her eyes.

"Do you know what has happened, my Ivan?" she exclaimed, pulling at the man's sleeve. "They have placed a guard over the Countess Xenia."

The man's eyes widened. "At the Carloff palace?" cried he.

"Yes. It is Ursus."

"Ah! the big Cossack bear," laughed the other.

Dreva nodded.

"Then my pretty giantess has struck," resumed the man, who was Ivan Panine, the Siberian exile and Paul's friend. "She is showing her teeth quite early in the game," and he roused himself and looked at the girl.

"I saw Ursus with my own eyes," emphasized Dreva.

"I didn't doubt your word, child," Ivan said. "I know this man of the guards. A terrible fellow. But he is like all his kind." A smile came to the speaker's lips. "His presence tells me that Paul refused the Iron Eagle. He intends to stick to his Countess."

"And Xenia is so good to the poor," Dreva returned. "It is too bad."

"I suppose the next thing she will be invited to travel," almost hissed Panine.

(Continued on page seventeen.)

A FOOL'S MISTAKE

By Augustin W. Breeden.

PENNINGTON was a fool; that was the beginning and the end of his tragedy. It was a case in which a man's being a fool cost him his life and his soul. But perhaps his soul was already damned, and he simply hurried it to its final destination. However that may be, it all occurred thus:

Pennington had a dear little wife, the daughter of a proud but impecunious Southern family, a girl reared in the sheltered atmosphere of a cultured home, by a mother who had likewise been reared thus before her. She was a wholesome, jolly little woman, as sweet and sound as a Christmas apple. This little woman loved Pennington in spite of his selfishness and meanness, the littleness of his soul and the coarseness of most of his ideals. His pessimism and doctrine of total depravity of the species shocked her, and she often told him that he had too little faith in his race, especially in the female portion of it; but he would only fling back to her that she was an unsophisticated doll that knew nothing of life, and probably never would.

Mrs. Pennington did not exactly pet her husband; she simply allowed him to pet himself; and he did so most religiously and consistently. When these two had been married three years, Pen got a chance to quit the big metropolitan daily in whose composingrooms he worked, and go into the advertising department of a live Western newspaper at quite an advance in salary; and he gladly made the change.

The domestic plan was for him to go West first, and take his ease in a hotel, while his little wife stayed behind to pack and ship the furniture; then she was to come on in order to be on hand to unpack it and install it in their new flat as soon as it should arrive. This was a plan that would take all the work and worry of moving entirely off the husband's shoulders and put them on those of the wife. Poor, brave, little Mistress Pen; she could endure everything at the hands of her lord, except one thing. That one thing he did.

Pennington arrived in the Western city, which, by the way, was anything but a moral one; and at once, being freed for the first time in three years from the wifely presence, plunged into dissipation of every sort. Without conscience and without shame he reveled for a week in all that was bad. Then, when the grosser sins began to cloy, he sought the refinements of wickedness. Before a second week had ended a friend of the same stripe as himself had initiated him into all that was darkest, most mysterious, and most shameful in the city's life.

In the midst of his dissipation his employer sent him out of the city on an assignment which kept him away for nearly a week. When he returned he found his little wife all cozily installed in a suitable flat conveniently near the car line and his work, and waiting to make the new home life the heaven that she considered home life ought to be. Her fortnight away from her husband had cleared her moral atmosphere; she had forgotten his meanness and cynicism; any thought of the elements of his nature which had formerly troubled her was now completely in abeyance in her mind; and for the time being he was, to her, one of God's good men.

He, on his side, was surprised and annoyed to find his wife in the city; it prevented him from plunging again into the dissipation that had become so sweet to him. She saw none of his annoyance, however, but received him with joy in her woman's heart. At supper he joked ambiguously about the kind of life he had been leading while away from her, and hinted darkly at a romance with a lady high in the circles of the city's respectability. She told him that she had been in the city a week, and by comparing dates, they found that she had arrived in the city a whole twenty-four hours before his departure, and that she had simply been unable to locate his lodgings.

"So you see, I was in the city while you were flirting with this woman you hinted about," she said, not banteringly, but sadly. "What if you had met me."

"We could not have done so," replied the husband as if the words implied far more meaning than he dared express to his wife; "but I have a little souvenir of our meeting." He fingered his vest pocket ostentatiously. "Shall I show it to you?"

"I do not care to see it," replied the wife, and rose from the table to go about her further unpacking, happy in spite of the disquieting things her lord had been saying.

A half-hour later while she was rearranging the articles in one of her trunks, she threw a beautiful piece of rare lingerie across the bed near which her husband was standing.

"There is some rare lace on that garment," she began; then something else attracted her attention and she rattled on happily on another subject.

Pennington picked up the dainty piece of lace and linen and looked at it curiously. There was a three-cornered hole in the trimming, carefully patched with a piece of lace, a very good imitation of the original. In an instant the husband had plunged his fingers into his vest pocket and fished up a three-cornered bit of rare lace. He compared the pattern of the lace and the three-cornered hole to the shape of the piece in his trembling fingers.

A whole minute later the wife became suddenly conscious of her husband's prolonged silence, and, looking up, beheld him standing as white and rigid as a marble statue.

"What on earth is the matter, darling?" she cried.

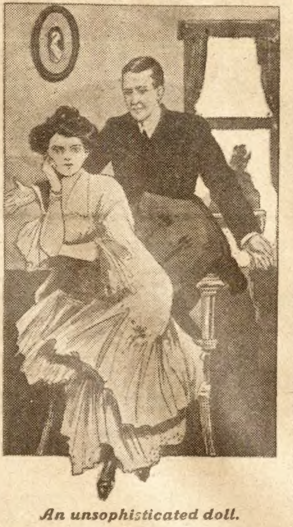
"Everything!"

His voice had a hollow, tragic ring, like the voice of a man who is about to face death.

"Darling!"

She sprang to her feet. In a moment she would have been at his side; but in that moment he had got out of the room. The next, she heard him close the front door and go hurriedly down the walk. She ran to the window to call him, but he had swung onto a passing street car and was gone.

For hours Mrs. Pennington paced the floor, wondering, hoping, dreading. What could have been the cause of her husband's sudden fit of anger, or whatever it was that had so moved him? What had they been speaking about? In her turmoil she could not even remember. All that she did remember was the joking remarks that he had made at the supper table and his offering to show her a souvenir of some affair or other. Perhaps he had been guilty of some sort of indiscretion, and his conscience had smitten him and driven him from her sight. But if that were the case, why did he not return to her? Why was he staying out all night?



An unsophisticated doll.

Midnight found the poor woman still pacing the floor and battling with her doubts. Her husband had now been gone nearly five hours. The telephone bell jangled, and she hastened to answer it, feeling sure it was he.

"Hello," said a woman's voice at the other end of the line. "Is this Mrs. Pennington?"

"This is Mrs. Pennington."

"Your husband is ill at the City Hospital," came the voice. "You'd better come down at once."

"Ill?" queried the wife. In a flash she knew what had taken place. "You mean he has attempted suicide?"

"Yes," replied the other, "he shot himself about half an hour ago. He may live till you get here if you make haste."

The wife dropped the receiver with a little moan. Five minutes later she was walking rapidly toward the City Hospital, too much beside herself to reflect that she was losing valuable time by this mode of locomotion. A driver of a "night hawk," who cried "Cab, lady!" to her several times, finally reminded her that it would be better to ride.

She reached the hospital and found her husband with a hole in his chest—dead. A kindly intentioned young hospital steward tried to tell her that he was sure it was an accident, but she shook her head.

"It was suicide," said she with blue, trembling lips. "But why he should wish to take his own life is a mystery to me. We were talking pleasantly enough, when he suddenly became silent, and when I asked him what was the matter he said, 'Everything,' and dashed from the room."

"Perhaps this will clear up the mystery," said a plain clothes police officer, as he suddenly handed the bereaved woman a thirty-eight-caliber revolver to which was attached a note and a three-cornered piece of rare lace pinned together.

The note read as follows:

"To the woman who calls herself my wife: This will explain to you why I committed suicide. No man could wish to live, knowing what I know."

The wife was mystified and hurt. That first line, "To the woman who calls herself my wife," made her feel as if the cold hand resting there upon the lifeless chest had just delivered her a blow in the face.

"All this means nothing," she said almost haughtily, "unless it means that my husband suddenly went insane." In her perturbation she had not even so much as seen the bit of lace.

"The piece of embroidery?" suggested the officer. "Did you notice that?"

The distraught woman again snatched up the note and looked intently at the bit of lace pinned to its back. At first she could make no sense of why it should be there, and it did not occur to her that it could possibly have any connection with the tragedy. Then, with that fine perception for unimportant details which is characteristic of a high state of excitement, she noticed curiously that the lace was of the same pattern and quality as the rare lace to which she had started to call her husband's attention. Then in a flash she remembered that it was that lace about which she and he were talking when he became silent so suddenly. He was looking at that garment with the curious three-cornered piece snipped out, and had suddenly dropped it and dashed from the room.

"There must be some connection between this bit of lace and my husband's death," she said at last, faintly; "but there is a mystery about it. I cannot understand it."

She stood for a moment, perfectly dry-eyed, looking at the cold form of her husband. Once she glanced at that insulting form of address upon the note and then at her husband's face, as if she were asking an explanation of the dead. At the end of a few moments she gave some simple directions about the preparation of the body for burial and returned to her flat.

The first thing she did upon reaching her apartments was to compare the piece of lace pinned to the note to the lace on the piece of lingerie. She had been right in her first impression; it was identical in quality, material, and pattern. She had an inspiration. This scrap was of exactly the same shape as the bit snipped from the garment lying on the bed. Here, indeed, was a coincidence. She had bought this three-piece set of lingerie in a dark old curio store the second day after her arrival in city. The Italian who sold it to her told her that a "fine lady" had given it to her Italian servant woman and told her not to sell it; but the woman had seen it was fine, and had sold it to him for money to give to a priest. After much higgling, Mrs. Pennington had secured it at a great bargain, even considering the hole snipped out of this piece. Reviewing the affair down to this point, the bereaved woman was again confronted with the mystery. How in the world had her husband come into possession of this particular bit of lace? And why had the discovery of its source caused him to want to die? The poor wife sat so long staring at her husband's note and trying to solve the riddle that she completely mesmerized herself, and found herself repeating a meaningless set of words as if they were a talisman.

Next morning she called in the plain clothes man and propounded the mystery to him. His final decision, as well as that of the dead man's father, who arrived in time for the burial, was that the husband's being in possession of that piece of lace was no mystery. It had been lying in one of the folds of the garment all along, and had fallen out on the bed, where he had picked it up. For the rest, he was insane—had gone suddenly mad, probably from overwork. She brought herself, temporarily, at least, to accept these simple and charitable explanations, and was heartbroken over the fact that she had been angry with the dead for those words written in insanity. Her poor bereft heart treasured up all the little kind words her husband had said, and culled out all the better traits of his disposition and dwelt upon them, until he was again, to her, one of God's good men.

But in her heart she was not satisfied; she knew intuitively that there was something back of her husband's death besides mere insanity. Even while she had the words "Requiescat in pace" carved upon the pure white marble of his tombstone, she felt that he was not resting in peace, and that she would see no real peace until she had solved the mystery of those stinging words: "To the woman who calls herself my wife."

A year passed by, and her strong feeling in the matter had become softened and blended with the little joys and little worries of life. Her husband was, after all, a good man. He had been very thoughtful of her future, and had provided well for her with his insurance. She was now living with her gentle mother in the big metropolis, far away from the wicked Western city in which her life's tragedy had occurred. She had about ceased to dwell upon the mystery, except in an idle, curious fashion, when one day a bolt fell out of the clear blue. The key to the riddle was tossed to her very feet.

A talkative French laundress whom her young mistress allowed to talk simply because she knew the futility of trying to stop her, began to tell of mysterious houses in all the big cities, where certain women, supposedly respectable, sometimes resorted, either driven by necessity or by the promptings of their own wicked hearts, and there in dark rooms and in silence, met lovers whom they might never encounter again, and who would never recognize them, though they met them next day at high noon. She said she had heard of a man who often went to such places and who had a habit of snipping off little bits of women's dresses, and once he had——

"That is enough!" cried the young widow. In a flash the whole mystery of her husband's suicide was solved. He had then believed her to be capable of secretly meeting men in that dark, dishonest way! He had cut this bit of lace from the clothing of some creature in one of those awful houses and afterward believed his wife to have been that creature! She was completely overcome with shame and anger. He, her husband, believed her to be that! Well, he was a fool, an unforgivable fool! She wished in her rage that she might call him out of his grave and tell him with what utter contempt she regarded him.

When the mother came up to her daughter's room an hour later, she found her laughing.

"Mamma," cried the younger woman, "I have just found out why that idiot committed suicide!"

The mother believed for a moment that her daughter had brooded so much over the mystery that she had lost her mind, but as the whole thing was explained to her, and she felt the force of the outrage the dead man had committed against his wife, she could easily understand the utter contempt and scorn with which her daughter regarded him.

In an instant the dead husband and all that was dear in his memory had been swept from his wife's slightest consideration. She regarded him now as she would have regarded an utterly vulgar and unworthy suitor in the days of her maidenhood. In her contempt she scarcely felt the sting of it; it was merely comical to her. But the next day she returned to the dead man's father all the insurance money and other property he had left her, and at the end of the week visited the Western city and had these words carved upon her husband's monument just below the dates of his birth and death, where the "Requiescat in pace" had at first been carved:

"Honi soit qui mal y pense." (Evil be to him who evil thinks.)

* * *

How She Did It.

As a married couple were walking down one of the main thoroughfares of a city, the husband noted the attention which other women obtained from passers-by, and remarked to his better half:

"Folks never look at you. I wish I had married some one better looking."

The woman tartly replied: "It's your fault. Do you think a man will stare at me when you're walking with me? You stop behind me and see whether the men look at me."

The husband hung back about a dozen yards, and for the length of the street was surprised to see every man his wife passed stare at her, and even turn around and look after her.

"Sure, lassie!" he exclaimed as he rejoined her. "I was wrong, and take it back. I'll never say aught about your looks again."

The wife had made a face at every man she met.

THE CLAM DIGGER

Or, A CEDAR RIVER MYSTERY - By WILLIS E. LINK

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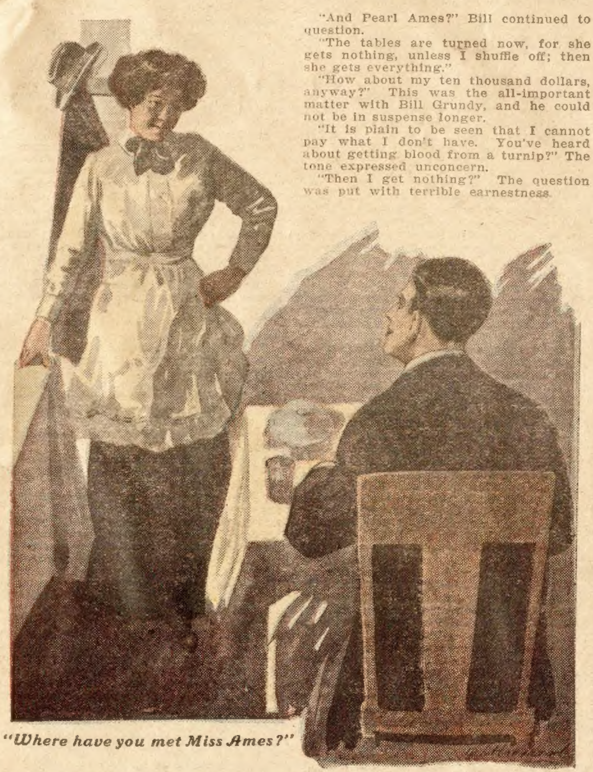
CHAPTER IX.

HENRY AND BETTIE.



"Where have you met Miss Ames?"

"ARE you going to faint away?" asked Bettie, as Henry sank into the chair by the table in the restaurant.

"No, sometimes I have a fit of vertigo and I feel weak for a minute." This was the excuse that came into his mind. "But how do you know Pearl Ames was my cousin?" He tried to speak unconcernedly, but was conscious that he did not entirely hide his perturbation.

"Oh, your name, and you resemble her somewhat," Bettie replied lightly, but her face wore an inscrutable smile.

"Indeed, but I have never been told that I have any of her looks," and a faint gleam of apprehension came into the eyes. "Where have you met Miss Ames?" he demanded abruptly.

"Nowhere, only when I was at Waterloo once on a visit, she was pointed out to me, and I have always remembered the face," and again the inscrutable smile.

"Well, although she was my cousin I never have had the pleasure of meeting her since our childhood days." He was upon his feet again and stood as if loth to terminate the conversation. With a nod of excuse, Bessie hurried away to wait upon another customer who had just entered.

"Well, I declare, you've surely made a mash upon my pretty waitress," ejaculated the proprietor, when Henry stepped to the counter to pay his bill.

"Rats!" was the testy response.

"Sure thing," positively stated the restaurant man. "You are a wonder with the girls, or Bettie Smith is plumb crazy to have a feller. I hardly thought that of her, either," he remarked under his breath, as he turned to welcome a new arrival.

Henry did not relish either of the two suppositions of the restaurant proprietor. His bold, free, and easy airs were "taking" to some girls, but Bettie, surely, was not of that kind. He had not tried any of his arts as he had so often played with the other class of girls. In the encounter he felt that Bettie had come off first best. There was something annoying in the thought that she was "dippy" to obtain a possible lover. Did she pay attention to him because he was a man? Down deep in his heart—below its sin and filth and crime—was beginning to grow a desire to be the man.

Billy Grundy did not put in an appearance all day. Henry impatiently walked the streets or loafed at various places. For a wonder he kept out of the saloons. Possibly the hope of having another meeting with Bettie had something to do with this.

At evening Henry was back at the restaurant. He maneuvered so as to secure a table that Bettie served. She recognized him by a nod and smile. He managed to toy and mince with the food until he was the last at the tables.

"We'll have to charge you demurrage," smilingly announced Bettie, as she stopped at his elbow.

"I am working a scheme," seriously stated the dilatory eater.

"What may that be?"

"I know that I am presumptuous, but I want a chance to ask you to go to some place with me tonight—you choose the place, if you wish." For the first time in his varied experience he flushed and felt an embarrassment at asking any such favor.

"I know I am imprudent, but I am going to accept your invitation," and a strange light shone in the girl's eyes.

"When you are through you will find me at the door." As Henry arose and left the table his heart was beating with genuine pleasure.

In an hour the two were out on the street. Bettie demurred when asked if she wished to attend a big theatrical performance.

"I would rather stay out of doors and talk," she declared.

This coincided with the inclinations of her escort. They were now up on Main street, and across from them loomed the courthouse in the center of a city square. Trees dotted the unoccupied ground, and under some of them seats were provided. The two were fortunate in finding a vacant bench where for an hour they sat and chatted.

Afterward, Henry was conscious that he learned very little about Bettie's history. She had come from some other town—Mason City, if he remembered—and was alone in the world, or nearly so, anyhow. But she managed to get a good deal of his career—except the dark portions. She was not particularly inquisitive, but she showed such an intense interest when he talked about himself. Manlike, under such a condition, he expatiated pretty fully.

In a lull of the conversation, he gazed idly out on the street. Suddenly his attention was attracted.

"Bill Grundy!" he ejaculated under his breath, but Bettie caught the murmur. Henry did not notice the start she gave nor the pallor quickly coming into the face.

"Pardon me; I will return in a moment," and Henry hurried to the street, while the girl turned in her seat so that it would not be possible for the man to see her face should he glance that way.

For five minutes the two men talked, and a place of meeting later that night was agreed upon. Then Henry returned to his seat in the courthouse square. Bettie was not there. Perhaps she had changed her seat, so he looked over the square. No Bettie. Perplexed, he finally determined to return to the restaurant. He was relieved, but also surprised, to find that Bettie had returned and was in her room. With mingled feelings of chagrin and wonder, he repaired to the place of meeting with Bill Grundy. That person was already in waiting.

"The job is done," said Bill, shortly.

"I am sorry you were so devilishly prompt," Henry replied, as if the subject bored him, "for it has turned out a useless piece of business."

"How so?" asked Bill.

"Well, since I saw you last my Uncle Tom took a notion to make a new will before he died. Since you have done your job so well, I really wish he had left the old will just as it was. It would have been better for me and better for you. But he got to thinking I was reforming, and the Waterloo family was paying him no attention, so he pays me one way and them another."

Of course the profanity liberally sprinkled through these remarks is omitted, as well as in reports of other occasions where Henry Ames is the speaker.

"Well, how?" Bill was getting impatient.

"The property is to be put into bonds, and as long as I am good, I get the interest, and if I stay good I get the bonds themselves at the end of ten years," briefly stated Henry.

"And Pearl Ames?" Bill continued to question.

"The tables are turned now, for she gets nothing, unless I shuffle off; then she gets everything."

"How about my ten thousand dollars, anyway?" This was the all-important matter with Bill Grundy, and he could not be in suspense longer.

"It is plain to be seen that I cannot pay what I don't have. You've heard about getting blood from a turnip?" The tone expressed unconcern.

"Then I get nothing?" The question was put with terrible earnestness.

"Oh, if I am living ten years from now, and have been a good boy so as to get the big lump in my paws, then I will hand you ten thousand dollars with pleasure." The voice was indifferent and slightly sarcastic.

The darkness hid the clinched fists and drawn face of Bill Grundy. He realized his expectations had fallen flat—his plans had been wrecked. For a moment he could scarcely constrain himself from leaping at the throat of his associate in crime. Did Bill know that the hand of young Ames was in a pocket grasping a revolver? Perhaps. Would the ten thousand dollars be handed over, even if the Ames will had not been changed? Bill doubted this now. As it was, perhaps it was all a lie. But what could he do? Neither plotter would dare expose the other.

After rapidly going over the situation with a perplexed and distressed mind, the bitterly disappointed man concluded to supplicate.

"Hank," and the voice was pleading, "can't you do something for me? See what I have done for you. I am so hard up—our farm is likely to be taken at any time. I haven't money enough to buy a decent suit of clothes. You've got something—I have nothing. Can't you help me out some?"

"I had a hundred dollars handed me before I left St. Paul. I will give you half." There was no doubt about this being the final answer.

"This is terrible!" fairly moaned the wretched man, wiping his face in his agitation, "and I so wanted to get to Canada."

"Well, in a few weeks I will give you enough to get there, although it will take the most of what is coming to me then. After that you will have to wait the ten years," Henry closed lightly, and Bill knew it was the best he could hope for.

After talking a few minutes longer, the two returned to the lighted streets of the city where Bill received the fifty dollars. Henry then repaired to a hotel and secured a room for the night. After he had retired, he lay awake until long past midnight, perplexed over the action of Bettie. Disgusted with himself, he tried to shake the matter from his mind. Sleep finally came.

In the morning he hurried to the restaurant for breakfast—but most of anything, to meet Bettie and learn the reason for her sudden departure from the courthouse square.

CHAPTER X.

"THE THREE HIGHWAYMEN."

AS NATHAN watched out of the window of his cabin, a runabout glided into sight and disappeared down the road. Some belated traveler or a physician returning from a night call, he decided. Why did the three men seek cover? If nothing was wrong, they would not have avoided the notice of the driver of the machine.

"A guilty conscience," mused Nathan. To his imagination mysteries were appearing wherever he looked. The shadows among the trees, the dark river a few rods away held secrets which were becoming more perplexing every day.

The next morning he did not start to work in the river. An uneasiness and excitement possessed him, an unreasoning belief that he was, as it were, on the eve of a day of light, when all the things so troubling him would be understood. He went down into the city, but there was nothing new to learn. Seeking he knew not what, he strolled down the river for miles. The water rippled along placidly in the sunlight, and effectually covered what might be beneath the dancing waves.

In his ramble Nathan noticed a man on the opposite shore splashing around in the current. With a long pole he was investigating among the rocks and deeper places of the river bottom. A wave of disgust and anger swept over Nathan as he recognized the figure as that of Sam Grundy. This persistency of Sam was becoming unbearable to Nathan, although he could give no reason for this state of mind.

During the day he overheard two men discussing a "holdup" of the night before. He paid little attention to the talk until he was dimly conscious that the words "three men" were spoken. At once he was interested and joined in the conversation. It did not take long to learn that the affair happened at the I. C. railroad yards about eleven o'clock of the evening before. It was quite dark, and the assaulted man was walking at the outskirts of the yard bound for home. He passed without particularly noticing three men, who immediately afterward turned and struck him down. After rifling his pockets of a purse and some loose change, the footpads fled into the darkness. The assaulted man could give no clear description of the three men.

Nathan felt sure these three men and the three he saw from his cabin window were the same individuals. No wonder they wished to keep out of sight! But who were they? Their headquarters must be somewhere in the neighborhood surrounding him, for if they had much farther to go they would have had some means of conveyance. Could it be the Grundys? The family did not contain three men. A third confederate might come from some other source. He would not yet inform the police of his suspicions, but first would satisfy himself by watching the Grundy house that night. With this idea in mind, he arrived at his cabin about twilight.

Darkness had settled down over the landscape when Nathan emerged from his door and started out at his work as an amateur detective. The road was not a frequently traveled one—the main highway was farther back from the river. He advanced cautiously, however, as he might be watched himself. Supposing the three men should start out on a nocturnal expedition and see or hear him? They would slide into concealment, and the outcome of the night's work would be unsatisfactory, to say the least. So he must be very cautious.

He advanced slowly, seeking the deep shadows and stopping to listen intently every short distance. It was an hour before he had passed the half-mile intervening between his own cabin and the old Grundy house and ensconced himself behind a clump of bushes where he could have a view of the front portion. He decided if he saw nothing that night, the next time he would watch from the rear of the house. For a half-hour he silently gazed at the building—it seemed as if half the night had been so spent—when he noticed a change in the shadows upon the porch. He was sure he heard the door shut, and a minute after three persons walked rapidly away from the house. For a few rods their direction was toward him, and in consequence he was enabled to observe them a trifle more distinctly. There were surely three men. They disappeared down the road which he had traveled less than an hour before.

For some time Nathan remained silent and motionless behind the bush. It was hard to decide upon his next course of action. It might he hours before the three returned, and the waiting would be trying in the extreme. A desire to explore the house came to him, but he dismissed the thought. It would be foolish, even if he could secure an entrance in some manner, for Jane Grundy would no doubt detect his presence, and she would be no mean antagonist to run against. Not a ray of light shone from the house anywhere, nor had any such appeared since he arrived at his point of observation. The mistress had retired, or was keeping watch somewhere within the gloomy domicile. It was not prudent even to approach any closer than he was.

Two long, trying hours passed. Tired with the vigil, he seated himself upon the ground, and mentally debated the question of returning home or waiting until the three returned. He did not know what he would gain by waiting, only something might result.

As he sat and pondered something seemed to come into his ears, and his mind went back to the hour he stood not far away and heard the voice out of the Unknown sounding the old church hymn. How beautiful it was! He seemed to hear it again in his memory. Almost with a cry he leaped upon his feet and listened. He was hearing the old tune again!

It was not imagination, he fiercely told himself. It was not so strong as before, and seemed farther away, but it was the same. It was so faint and far away that he did not venture to supply the words at first, but as the melody continued, he softly repeated:

"All my trust on Thee is stayed.
All my help from Thee I bring,
Cover my defenseless head
With the shadow of Thy wing."

As he uttered the last word, the melody ceased.

"Amen," came reverently and naturally from his lips. No doubt Pearl was speaking words of comfort to him from out the Great Beyond. He could think of no other explanation, for he was almost positive the tones did not come from the house. Even if the singer was in the building, who could it be but Jane Grundy? The devils in perdition would be as likely to sing that grand old song as would she. If by any possibility Bessie was imprisoned, it was not her voice. The obsession was still with him that it was the voice of Pearl.

He never knew how long he stood as if in a trance. He became conscious of his surroundings when he heard voices. The three were returning. They were conversing in low tones as they approached the house. When near to his hiding-place, one spoke, and Nathan started in antonishment as he recognized the voice of Jane Grundy. The amateur detective now understood who the three were. Jane Grundy was dressed in men's clothing.

After the "three highwaymen"—as Nathan mentally designated the trio—had entered the house, he hastened back to his cabin, for he felt there was no need to be cautious on this return trip. Throwing himself upon his couch, it was an hour before he fell asleep.

In the morning he decided to continue his investigation. These sights were suspicious, no doubt, but not conclusive evidence of any certain crime. The spirit of investigation was strong with him. He felt that he must get hold of more positive evidence, and he wished no partners in the undertaking. During the day he was down in the city and purchased an assortment of keys and a pocket flashlight. Then he returned to his cabin and waited impatiently for night.

CHAPTER XI.

THE LOVE OF HENRY AMES.

AS HENRY AMES entered the restaurant the morning after his interview with Bill Grundy, Bettie was at her duties. He took a seat at one of her tables and nervously awaited his turn to be served. She soon passed him and smiled a greeting into his eyes. A sensation of comfort came over him, for surely the smile was kind and friendly. He could detect no air of satisfaction or triumph at the trick she had played upon him. A conception came to him that she was above any such trifling schemes. She was so different from other girls he had been interested in—girls whose present condition was not troubling him at all, although he had dragged them down into the mire of degradation. He was not shrewdly calculating her value to him in dollars and cents. He was not scheming to drag her over a precipice to satisfy his own pleasures. Dimly there came to him a vista of a long road leading into the future, and he and Bettie hand in hand traveling along that highway. So he was dreaming when she spoke at his elbow:

"Good morning, Mr. Ames. I suppose you think it surprising the way I did last night and I wish to beg your pardon. I was taken suddenly ill, and I did not wish to interrupt the conversation between you and Mr. Grundy, so I slipped off alone. Won't you forgive me?"

"Of course I will," he smilingly responded, "but how did you know it was Bill Grundy?" A shade of perplexity came over his face.

There was a slight biting of the lip, an instant's hesitation before Bettie replied.

"You spoke his name, but I heard you, when you saw him passing along the street," and she laughed lightly as if it were nothing at all remarkable. "Now please give me your order, or I may get my walking papers for trifling this way."

Although it was an ordinary restaurant affair, there was something satisfying and contenting about his breakfast that morning. It would have been simply delightful if Bettie had been eating at the same table with him. But he could see her as she glided around at her duties, and this was something not to be ignored. A subtle radiance from her seemed to go out and transform the whole restaurant. The place surely appeared different than on the preceding morning. He toyed with his breakfast as long as he dared, but Bettie was too busy for any further conversation. Regretfully he departed.

He had not expected to stay in Marshalltown any longer than was necessary to meet Bill Grundy. Now that this meeting had occurred, he did not wish to leave. There was nothing urgent requiring his presence in St. Paul. He might as well stay here as anywhere. Thus he reasoned, and remained in the city on the Iowa.

Bettie waited upon him at noon when he appeared in the restaurant, but was too busy to pass even a few remarks. At evening he timed his entrance and sat at his table until he was the last to finish. He was rewarded by having an opportunity to obtain Bettie's consent to another evening together.

"I hope I can stay with you this time and not have to run away," she laughed, as she hurried to finish her work for the day.

Again they occupied a seat on the courthouse square. Bettie wished to do this rather than to attend a show of any kind. Henry was more than willing. Nothing interrupted their conversation that evening. As on the preceding evening, Bettie gave little information about herself, only some likes and dislikes. She was still interested in him and listened intently as he told about himself. He could give accounts of events and incidents, but her questions often led him to a wall, as it were, where he had to halt abruptly. He became more and more dissatisfied at this situation. If only the wall were not there! If there were nothing to hide or conceal! A sinking of the heart came to him as he realized he must never reveal his real past to this girl seated by his side.

The next forenoon Henry Ames sat in the courthouse square putting in most of his time at building air castles. The beautiful structure was erected for and its walls surrounded one special object—Bettie Smith. Yes, he mused, she was sweet and pretty enough to make a wife any man might be proud of. He could get married and settle down as well as not. With his income he could support a tasty and comfortable home. With Bettie as its mistress, he would have no desire again to seek pleasures in forbidden paths—he would become a thoroughly respectable member of society. There would be no danger of losing his fortune by mingling with the kind of people he had always associated with. His life, surely, would flow along in pleasant channels. Of course, he had sown a bountiful crop of wild oats, but that was ended. Some of his fields would have to be kept from the knowledge of this pure and sweet girl, but other men were living this kind of life. As far as he could see, things went smoothly enough with them. So it would be with him.

Thus dreaming that his free sowing of wild grain would result in the reaping of a plenteous crop or success and happiness, the deluded mortal waited impatiently for another evening to arrive. Bettie had promised him her company once more, and he had determined to lay his heart at her feet.

When she was with him again he led her to a park along the river north of the city. Seeking a secluded seat he sat down beside her.

"I feel as if I wanted to be more by ourselves than we have been up at the courthouse," explained.

"And I feel that I am doing wrong in being out with you as I have," stated Bettie.

"Haven't I always treated you right?" he asked, in a hurt tone.

"That isn't it," she responded. "However, we will try to have a pleasant evening, but it will be our last."

"Oh, Bettie!" The exclamation involuntarily escaped his lips.

"You are getting quite well acquainted," admonished Bettie, a trifle coolly. "You are not to be criticised, however, considering what I have done."

"It seems as if we have known each other so long I forgot myself." The man was pulling nervously at a prominent ring upon his finger.

"Three days, nearly," sententiously remarked Bettie.

"Well, it has been long enough for me to find out that I love you," he declared almost fiercely. It was evident the speaker was desperately in earnest.

For a moment the girl was speechless. She had not expected any such an outburst. If this declaration had been different—just how, she could not then explain—she might have passed it off as the play of a trifler with hearts.

"I wonder how many girls you have told that?" she asked, more to say something than because she wanted the information.

"I don't know," he frankly answered, "but you are different."

"I presume several girls have heard this, also," and a weariness came into the voice.

"No, no girl ever did, for I never wanted one to marry me. I do you." He was standing before her, and by the dim light reflected from an electric lamp some distance away, she could see that his face was drawn with emotion. "I love you—I want you for my wife," he repeated.

"Believe me, I never looked for this," spoke the girl, in a worried, remorseful tone of voice.

"You can go to St. Paul with any friend you choose—I will pay everything," continued Henry, without any attention to what Bettie uttered. "You can go to my lawyer or to a bank. You will learn that I can give you a good home and support you well. I know very little about you, only that you are yourself. I am ready to trust you. Will you not trust me?" He now was upon his knees.

"We had better return, for the pleasant talk I looked forward to will be anything but that the rest of the evening." Bettie arose as if to go. "I do not see how your proposition can be considered," she went on. "I do not love you. I cannot fall in love on three days' acquaintance," she added, as if an afterthought.

"Won't you give me a chance to win out?" he pleaded, as he rose to his feet.

"I think this is useless," she firmly replied. My husband must have no dark spots in his life."

"You can make a man of me," he still pleaded.

"I want my husband to be a man already." The reply was severe, but the hearer only groaned.

"Do you love any one else?" He suddenly asked the question and looked searchingly into her face. If she blushed, the shadows hid this.

"I refuse to answer," and she started away.

"Let me see you home, but I am not going to give up the fight yet," he doggedly concluded.

"I am sorry, for I think the result will surely be disappointment and bitterness," was the response. "Let us drop this subject and talk as if nothing had happened while we are sauntering back."

In half an hour he left her at the door of the restaurant.

"I must win—I will win," he mentally declared, as he walked away after bidding the girl good night.

Bettie in her room dropped down upon her bed, a troubled expression upon her face.

"I do not know whether I am sorry for this or not," she murmured. "I just could not go on the way I planned any longer, but I never thought the explosion would come so soon. Perhaps I have thrown away a great opportunity. If so, so be it. It isn't easy to stab the man who loves you, even if you do think him a villain."

She arose and stepped to the dresser. Reaching among the folds of her dress, she drew out a tiny revolver and placed it in the drawer.

"No, I want a husband bad enough—but not this one," she whispered.

The next day Henry haunted the restaurant. Bettie avoided conversation as much as possible without being too reserved. A pity came into her heart as she caught the pleading, longing look in his eyes and noticed the haggard expression of the face. No matter what his past had been, he was now sincere in his love for her. A frown would gather on her forehead and she would nervously bite her lips as she thought of this. It was a long day for Henry, and just as long for Bettie.

That evening her work at the tables was nearly done. Her love-sick admirer had not been in the room for an hour. She thought of this as she stood idle for a moment while lines of worry gathered in her pretty face. Perhaps the unwelcome suitor would be back again. To avoid meeting him, she would hurry and finish her duties. As she started to do so, she glanced apprehensively toward the front door. She was not greatly surprised to see Henry Ames enter, followed by a companion. A blow seemed to strike Bettie and she grasped the back of a chair for support. The companion was Sam Grundy!

This capital story will be continued in the next issue of the Ledger. During the coming months many great stories will appear in these columns. If you are not already a subscriber for this paper, it will repay you if you send in a year's subscription. It costs you only $1.00, and you will never regret it. Let us hear from you at once.

* * *

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"Good evening, auntie. I am glad you came. We are going to have tableaux this evening."

"Yes, I know," replied the old lady; "I smelt 'em when I first came in."

* * *

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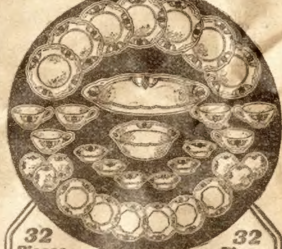

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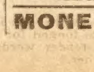

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Snares of Fate

Or, Tangled Threads -:- By Emma Howard Wight

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CHAPTER XXVI.

"TELL ME OF MY MOTHER!"

AS FLORENCE was gathering her roses, a dreamy look of happiness in her eyes, a shadow fell suddenly across the flower bed, and looking up she met the sinister eyes of David Steele. He looked at her for a moment intently. Then he passed on. The girl shivered. She felt chilled, a sense of depression stole over her.

"I do wish father would send that man away," she murmured, as she went toward the house with her basket of roses. "He fills me with a strange fear."

David went into the house. Charles Burk was just leaving, and they passed each other in the hall. Charles Burk glanced indifferently at the man in rough working clothes. David felt suddenly very curious in regard to the clerical visitor.

He went into the library. Stanley was seated, his face grave, in deep thought. He glanced at David in an abstracted way, and then aroused himself with an effort.

"Yes, it's all settled," he said, with a touch of impatience. "I've given my consent; they are engaged. Nothing stands in the way of the marriage unless the Governor and his wife withhold their consent which isn't at all likely."

David drew a long, tense breath.

"The marriage must be hurried along," he said, with the sinister eagerness that Stanley found so repelling. "I've been waitin' long, long, and as the time gits nigh. I feels as though I jest couldn't wait."

Stanley gave a half-impatient shrug of the shoulders.

"You'll be obliged to wait," he declared. "I believe, however, that young Vincent will press for an early marriage. I hope so. I am as anxious as you are to have it all over, and to be free," he added, half to himself.

David turned to go out. At the door he turned and looked back at Stanley.

"You had a visitor, a stranger in these parts," he said. "A preacher, warn't he?"

"Yes," replied Stanley. He paused and then added, "A friend whom I have not seen for twenty years." He looked at David with a curious smile. "He did me a great kindness at one time. I shall always be grateful to him."

David waited a moment; then, as Stanley did not show any disposition to afford any further information, he went out. He felt a sense of disappointment, however, for he was oddly curious in regard to Stanley's clerical friend. In a little while he had forgotten all about him, and was again absorbed in the cruel, gloating anticipation of the fulfillment of his long-cherished desire for revenge.

That same evening Stanley and Florence were seated after dinner upon the veranda facing the sea. Suddenly the girl arose, came and stood beside Stanley's chair resting her hand lightly on his shoulder.

"Father, I do wish you would send David Steele away," she said very earnestly.

A smile, in which there was a touch of sardonic amusement, passed over Stanley's lips.

"Why do you want Steele sent away?" he parried.

She explained how the man affected her. A great pity surged over Stanley.

"Poor child!" he murmured to himself. "Her woman's intuition is not at fault." Aloud he said, "I will think over what you say, my dear," and made up his mind that David must keep out of her way. "Now, we will not talk about Steele any more," he added, with a touch of weariness.

She seated herself on the arm of his chair and slipped her arm about his neck, a little timidly, for endearments were rare between them. Stanley moved uneasily, as he felt the touch of the soft arm about his neck, then controlled himself, submitting passively to the girl's caress.

"Father, did you love my mother very much?" she asked.

Stanley inclined his head without speaking.

"You were happy, very happy, were you not?" queried the girl, softly.

"Yes." Stanley spoke mechanically, gazing straight before him.

"Today," there was a plaintive note in her sweet voice, "I have so longed for a mother's kiss, a mother's tender words. Father, tell me of my mother."

Stanley put her away from him abruptly and arose to his feet.

"Don't ask me to do that!" he said, hoarsely, and passed into the house.

She looked after him, startled for the moment, then a little sad smile quivered across her lips.

"Poor father! How dearly he must have loved my mother, since he cannot bear to speak of her!" she murmured. Then suddenly she thought of the woman whom for sixteen years she had believed to be her mother, and shuddered. Her heart contracted with sickening pain. "I had almost forgotten what my life was before father found me. Ought I to tell Henry about her—about that part of my life?" A shivering sigh left her lips. "It would be dreadful to have to do it, but I will do it if it is right." She stood for a moment, her hands tensely clasped, her face pale and distressed. "I will speak to father about it. He will know what is best."

"Florence!"

She turned quickly to find Harry Vincent beside her. And coming up the veranda steps was Mrs. Vincent.

"I've brought mother," said Harry, and taking Florence's hand he led her forward to meet Mrs. Vincent.

As the girl looked at Mrs. Vincent shyly, appealingly, the little sore feeling of jealousy in the latter's heart gave way to a rush of tenderness. She took Florence in her arms and kissed her tenderly.

"You are going to be my dear, sweet daughter," she said.

A little sigh of delicious content broke softly over the girl's lips. The longing for a mother was satisfied.

Stanley had been right in the supposition that Harry Vincent would plead for an early marriage.

"I want to be married before we return to the capital," he said to Stanley, whom he sought in the library, leaving his mother and Florence together.

"You are both very young," murmured Stanley, feebly, being secretly very much elated at the turn affairs were taking.

Harry smilingly admitted that that was true, but no reason why they should not marry. So it was finally arranged that the marriage should take place in October at the Shore, a week previous to Governor Vincent's return to the capital.

"I did not expect to be married so soon," Florence demurred, when her father informed her of the date for the marriage.

"But you have no very serious objection, I suppose?" queried Stanley, smilingly.

She flushed. "No," she replied, simply. "Father," she paled as she spoke, "do you think it right for me not to tell them of my life before you found me?"

He reflected a moment before speaking.

"Do you think it would make any difference with the Vincents if they knew?" he asked.

"I am sure it would not make any difference with Harry," she replied. "But I do not know about Governor Vincent and his wife."

"Mrs. Vincent is herself of very humble origin," said Stanley. "She is the daughter of a farmer, and was a country school-teacher when Vincent married her."

Florence smiled sadly. "That is different, I think," she said.

"Yes, I suppose so," Stanley admitted, rather reluctantly. He sighed a little wearily. "We will tell them nothing," he declared.

A sigh of relief broke from the girl's lips.

"I am so glad," she murmured, accepting his decision unquestioningly.

"I would be tempted to thwart David Steele if it were not for that fifteen thousand dollars," Stanley said to himself, when he was alone. "I would do it if I had only myself to consider. But I want the money for Florence's child, for my child," he added softly, with a great yearning at his heart.

A sudden great fear swept over him. What if his child were a daughter, and he found her in shame, degraded, lost? "The sins of the parents shall be visited upon the children." He shuddered.

The door opened and David entered. He knew of the visit of Harry Vincent and his mother, and wished to know if anything had been arranged in regard to the marriage. Vincent briefly informed him of the date set for the marriage, keeping his eyes averted from David's face in order not to see the fiendish exultation which he knew was written upon it.

"When do you intend to spring your revenge?" he asked, when he had finished.

"In about a week after the marriage takes place," David replied, with a promptness that showed he had it all planned out. "Mag Macks, she'll be heah to go 'long when I tell 'em."

Stanley turned upon him almost fiercely. "What?" he cried. "What?"

David gave him a keen look in which there was a touch of suspicion.

"I don't see nothin' so amazin' in havin' the gal's mother to back me up," he said.

Stanley turned away abruptly, walked to the window and drew in a long breath of the fresh, crisp air. When he turned again to David, he had regained perfect control of himself.

"You know where the woman is to be found?" he queried.

"I shall know whar to find her when I want her," David replied, going toward the door.

"Good heavens! The lust for revenge turns men into fiends," cried Stanley, when he was alone. "Heaven have pity upon that poor girl!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

"WHOM GOD HATH JOINED."

THE Bluff Villa was a blaze of light, the receptionrooms and hall exquisitely decorated. It was Florence Stanley's wedding night.

In her dressing-room, she stood in her bridal gown, beautiful as a dream. There was a tap at the door, and her maid opened it, admitting Stanley. He stopped just beyond the threshold, gazing at the girl wonderingly, marveling at her beauty.

"And this exquisite creature was the daughter of Mag Macks," he thought. It seemed incredible, and, yet, it was true.

He moved toward the girl, looking very handsome and aristocratic in evening dress, with a rare white flower in his buttonhole. His face looked pale and very grave.

"Are you ready?" he asked.

Florence looked at him wistfully. The maid had passed into the adjoining room, leaving them alone together. Stanley's

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eyes fell under the look the girl bent upon him.

"If you are ready, we had better go down," he said, in a colorless voice.

"Father." She moved appealingly nearer to him.

Slowly, reluctantly, he lifted his eyes and looked at her. A thrill went through him, as he met the blue eyes, tender, wistful, questioning. Great heavens! How like they were to the eyes of Florence Denison! He had seen the same look in her eyes when he had been curt or cold.

"What is it, father?" exclaimed Florence; startled by the strange look on his face.

He pulled himself together and replied, with a forced smile:

"I was thinking that there never was a fairer bride than you."

She smiled faintly. His light words hurt her. She wanted him to take her in his arms and speak tender words that she would remember always.

"Father, you will miss me? You will be lonely when I am gone?" she murmured.

"Yes, I shall miss you," he replied. He looked at her in a way she could not understand. He took her hand, the one on which the wedding ring would soon be placed, and lifted it to his lips. It was a strange caress from a father to a daughter, and she wondered a little.

"God forgive me!" he murmured under his breath.

She caught only the first word and thought he had blessed her. She smiled contentedly.

"I am ready to go down now," she said.

The maid came into the room and arranged Florence's bridal veil.

"I hope you will be very happy, Miss Stanley," she said, with feeling.

Stanley turned abruptly and opened the door. Florence smiled kindly upon the girl, as she turned to go out.

"Thank you, Mary;" she said.

As she and her father reached the top of the stairway, he turned to her and asked her if she was frightened. She shook her head smilingly.

"Frightened? Why, no, indeed," she replied.

"She is a thoroughbred," thought Stanley, and then was struck with the dreadful mockery of it. The daughter of a creature like Mag Macks a thoroughbred!

"Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?"

Something like a sigh of relief left Stanley's lips as he responded. As those words were spoken it seemed to him that the fetters that had bound him for three years fell away and he was again free. Free to go his own way with his ill-gotten money, the price of the most despicable piece of villainy of which a man could be guilty, and to forget if he could. Ay, if he could!

"Whom God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

What course would Governor Vincent pursue when he knew the truth about the girl his son had married? Would those words spoken by the minister of God have power to restrain him. Or would he ruthlessly disregard them?

"I now pronounce you man and wife."

Standing at one of the windows, peering hungrily through the flowers and lace draperies, David heard those words, and his breath came hissingly from between his lips.

Across the lawn a woman alighted from a carriage, a guest who had arrived late. A black satin coat, trimmed with rare fur, enveloped her. She was about to pass up the steps to the door when she caught sight of the figure crouching at the window. She turned, went swiftly up to it, and recognizing David Steele, bent over and touched him on the shoulder. He started and looked up into the face of Kathryn Ward.

"Come with me. I wish to speak to you," she said.

He arose and followed her. She led the way to the inclosed rustic seat where Harry Vincent had told Florence that he loved her. The grounds were flooded with electric light, and in the white glare Kathryn Ward and David Steele faced each other.

"You hate Governor Vincent and his wife," she declared. "You hate them as much today as you did twenty-four years ago when you sat in the courtroom and heard the sentence of death pronounced upon your brother."

"What makes you reckon I hate 'em?" he asked cautiously.

She laughed a low, strange laugh.

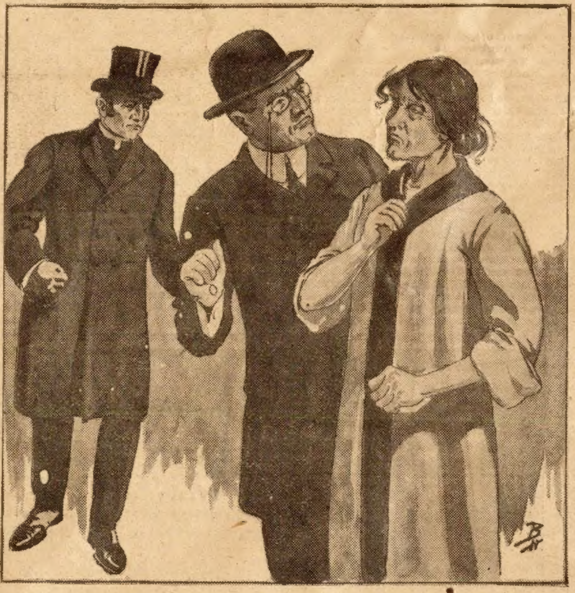
"It's your nature to hate, and you never forget nor forgive," she replied. "You have the tenacity of the bulldog, a rare patience, and the faculty of knowing how to wait. When I saw you here, posing as a gardener, I knew it was with some purpose. I believe that purpose to be one of revenge. Am I right?"

He looked at her half questioningly, half suspiciously.

"I don't know as I am bound to tell you nothin'," he replied sullenly. "What's it to you anyway?"

"A great deal," she replied.

They stood gazing steadily at each other. The mask had dropped from the woman's face, and she stood revealed to the man. A look of understanding flashed into his eyes. A slow smile crept about his lips. He nodded comprehendingly.



"She is not your daughter!"

"I remember now that he done you bad," he said.

Her eyes narrowed, but she did not wince. His words, his manner had no power to sting, to humiliate her. She was impervious, because absorbed by the same overmastering passion that possessed the man and made them kin, the refined, cultured woman and the rough, ignorant mountaineer.

She opened her wrap as though oppressed. She was gowned in black with touches of gold. Diamonds glittered on her breast, about her throat, and in her hair. In the searching white light her face looked haggard and lined and old. In her eyes there was a greedy look.

The man drew nearer to her. Then in a low voice, gloating, exultant, he told her all. She listened, her breath coming quickly.

Later, she entered the drawingroom where the bride and groom stood beneath a marriage bell of white roses. There was a slight smile about her lips and a glittering light in her eyes as she moved up the long room in her black and gold draperies. She kissed the beautiful bride and wished her happiness, shook hands with and congratulated the radiant-looking young bridegroom.

Stanley, who was standing near, observed her attentively, impressed by the look on her face, which in a vague way seemed familiar to him.

Kathryn moved away to where Governor Vincent and his wife were standing, the latter very beautiful in a magnificent gown of rose brocade. The Governor also regarded Kathryn a little curiously. She appeared more animated than he ever remembered to have seen her before. It struck him that it did not become her as well as her lanquid indifference, her absolute calm.

"I never remember to have seen Miss Ward display so much—" he hesitated for a word—"vivacity as she does tonight," he remarked to his wife, as Kathryn passed on.

Mrs. Vincent slightly shrugged her statuesque shoulders.

"I did not notice," she replied. "Miss Ward doesn't interest me. You know I never cared for her."

"She doesn't seem to have the faculty of making persons care for her," said Governor Vincent. "I suppose it's because she is so cold."

"Cold!" exclaimed Mrs. Vincent, incredulously. "I do not believe that she is cold. She strikes me as a woman of very strong passions."

"What in the world makes you think that?" exclaimed the Governor.

"Oh, I don't know," replied Mrs. Vincent, indifferently. "I really have never thought much about it, but that always has been my impression of her."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HIS CHILD.

IT WAS the morning following the wedding. Stanley had just finished a late breakfast when a servant entered and told him a gentleman wished to see him.

"Did he send a card or his name?" asked Stanley.

"No, sir, but the gentleman is a clergyman."

"A clergyman!" Stanley started quickly for the door.

In the drawingroom he found the Rev. Charles Burk standing regarding admiringly the marriage bell.

"So your daughter was married last night to Governor Vincent's son?" he remarked, turning to meet Stanley.

"Yes," replied Stanley. He looked eagerly, questioningly, at his visitor. "Have you any news for me?"

"Yes," replied Charles Burk. "I would not be here otherwise."

"Come to the library," said Stanley.

When they were seated in the library, Charles Burk continued:

"After I left you, three months ago, I began a search for the woman who kept the lodging-house in which Florence's child was born. Only a few days ago I succeeded in locating her. She lives with a daughter in Baltimore. From her I learned that the baby, a girl, named after the poor mother, had been taken by a woman living in the house at the time. The woman's name was Macks, Maggie Macks."

"Great heavens!" cried Stanley, starting to his feet, then he dropped weakly back into his chair and covered his face with his hands.

The Rev. Charles Burk stared at him in amazement. "What is the matter with you, Stanley?" he exclaimed.

Stanley lifted his face, white and drawn. He looked strangely at Burk.

"There is no need to search any further for my daughter," he said. "While you were trying to trace her, she was here under this roof. The girl known as my daughter is Florence's child and mine."

Charles Burk lifted his brows. "She has Florence's eyes," he declared.

Stanley arose and held out his hand.

"You did me a good turn twenty years ago, Charles, when you stood between me and the commission of a base and cowardly crime," he said, with great feeling. "And, now, you have done me another, God bless you!"

The Rev. Charles Burk smiled a little whimsically.

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"I am glad to hear it, but I am rather mystified. Suppose you enlighten me as to how this rather unique condition of affairs was brought about."

Both men had risen. Stanley pointed to the chair Charles Burk had just vacated.

"Sit down and I will tell you all," he said.

Charles Burk sat down with a reflective look on his face.

"So poor Florence's child is the wife of the son of the Governor of Virginia," he was thinking. "Fate plays strange tricks."

Harmer Stanley walked once or twice up and down the room to compose himself. Then he came and resumed his seat. Charles Burk listened quietly, but with close attention as Stanley told him all.

"I am glad that fellow, David Steele, will be thwarted," he said, when Stanley had finished. "When do you intend to tell him that his plot has come to naught?"

Stanley arose to his feet, his lips set in a grim, determined line.

"Now," he said, starting toward the bell.

Charles Burk stopped him with a gesture.

"Wait!"

Stanley looked at him questioningly.

"You say that Steele intends to sprnig his revenge upon Governor Vincent and his wife a week from the night of their son's marriage?"

Stanley nodded.

"And Steele knows where this woman, Mag Macks, is to be found?"

"Yes."

"Don't you think it would be best to obtain from the woman a statement that the girl is not her child and how she obtained possession of her before saying anything to Steele?" asked Charles Burk.

"Yes, I think that would be best," replied Stanley, after a moment's thought.

"Do you know where we can find the woman?"

"No, but I can find out from Steele."

"Very well, do so."

Stanley left the room. He was not gone long, and returned with the information that Mag Macks was at that time in a small village about five miles from the Shore.

"She came there yesterday," Stanley explained, "in order to be on hand when David Steele is ready for her. I doubt if the fellow will be able to wait a week now that he thinks the time is ripe. After waiting twenty-four years for his revenge, he does not seem to be able to control his impatience for a week longer."

"I suppose that is true," remarked Charles Burk. "The fact of having waited all those years only serves to make him the more impatient now. But we had better see this woman without any loss of time."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THWARTED.

STANLEY ordered his dogcart and they drove to the small inland village where he had been told by David that Mag Macks was to be found. They located her at a boarding-house kept by the wife of the blacksmith.

The Rev. Charles Burk looked frankly disgusted when she came into the small, dingy room where they awaited her. To Stanley she appeared more degraded, more repulsive, more sodden, than when he had seen her three years before. The thought that his beautiful child had for sixteen years believed this wretched creature to be her mother thrilled him with pain and indignation.

Mag Macks looked questioningly from Stanley to Charles Burk, then addressed the former.

"What do you want?" she asked sullenly. "Has Dave Steele sent you to bring me to him?"

Stanley looked at her sternly. "No," he replied. "David Steele has no further use for you."

She gave him a quick glance.

"Has he changed his mind then?" she asked. "Don't he want me to go with him to Governor Vincent and his wife and tell 'em that the gal their son's married be my daughter?"

"If you told them that, you would tell them a lie," declared Stanley, sternly. The woman gave a quick start. "She is not your daughter."

For a moment Mag Macks cowered, then she recovered herself to some extent.

"Say, what you givin' me?" she exclaimed, with a forced laugh. "The gal's mine all right."

"You may as well drop that," said Stanley. "The girl is not your daughter. She is the child of a woman known as Florence Denison and was born in a lodging-house on Freemason street in Norfolk. The mother died, and you took the child and brought her up as your own."

"It's a lie!" cried the woman.

"It is the truth," declared Stanley. He paused a moment and then added sadly, "The woman who gave birth to that child was my wife; the child is mine." Mag Macks stared at him open-mouthed. "You may as well make a clean breast of the whole thing," he went on. "You will gain nothing by trying to keep up the deception. The game's played out."

"I guess you're about right," admitted Mag Macks, after a moment's reflection. "If the gal had been my own flesh and blood I wouldn't had no hand in tryin' to pull her down," she continued, with a touch of feeling of which Stanley had not believed her capable. "But she ain't, and it seemed like she sorter felt it and could never bring herself to keer for me as child oughter for its mother. She seemed to turn ag'in' me even when she wasn't nothin' but a little tot, and as she grew older, she shrank from me more, had a sort of scorn for me. She despised me, and that's the truth." An ugly look, in which resentment and hatred were mingled, crossed her repulsive face. "I hate her!" she cried vindictively. "And I'd like to do her a bad turn."

"It is no longer in your power to harm her, thank God!" exclaimed Stanley, with feeling.

"I wonder how this fellow, Steele, will take being thwarted in his scheme of revenge?" said Charles Burk, musingly, as he and Stanley came in sight of Bluff Villa on their return.

Stanley had in his possession a statement, signed by Mag Macks, to the effect that young Mrs. Vincent was not her daughter, and setting forth how the girl came into her possession.

"I reckon it will go pretty hard with him," Stanley replied. "When a man has lived twenty-four years for one purpose, with but one object, he doesn't take very kindly to being thwarted."

"Hardly," remarked Charles Burk.

As they entered the house, Stanley told the butler to send David Steele to the library.

When David entered the library, he found Stanley walking restlessly up and down the floor, while Charles Burk stood at the window, looking quietly out at the sea. David looked at the latter with the same curious feeling he had experienced upon the clergyman's first visit. Then he turned to Stanley.

"You want to speak to me?" he queried.

"Yes." Stanley stopped, and the two men faced each other in the center of the room. There was that in the face and bearing of Stanley which at once arrested the attention of David Steele. He stood very still, his eyes fixed upon Stanley, waiting. Charles Burk turned from gazing at the sea and looked at David Steele, studying him with alert, attentive eyes. "David," continued Stanley, "I agreed to play a part for which I was to receive fifteen thousand dollars. I have played that part up to today. But I shall play it no longer. It ends now."

David's face darkened.

"You ain't earned yo' money yit," he declared. "Not till you goes with me to Governor Vincent and tells him that the gal his son's married ain't no daughter of your'n."

Stanley smiled peculiarly. "That would not be the truth, David. She is my daughter."

David started, then he gave a harsh laugh.

"You've been drinkin'?" he declared.

Stanley shook his head.

"No, I am in full possession of my senses. Your scheme has fallen through, David. Harry Vincent's young wife is not the daughter of Mag Macks. She is my child, and her mother was one of the purest and noblest of women. We were married by the Rev. Mr. Burk," he indicated the minister. "She died a few days after the birth of our child. Mag Macks took the child and passed it off as her own. My wife and I had—parted. I did not know there was a child until Mr. Burk told me of the fact upon the

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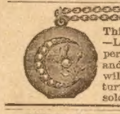

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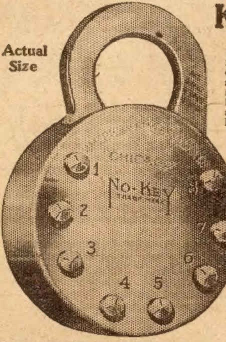

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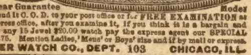

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occasion of his first visit here several months ago. Since then he has, at my request, been searching for the child. He came here today to tell me that my daughter had been brought up in the belief that she was the child of Mag Macks."

David stood like a man turned to stone. Stanley went on to tell of their visit to Mag Macks, and produced her statement, which he handed to the mountaineer.

David's strong, knotted hand shook as he took it. A gray pallor overspread his face as he read it, drops of sweat glistened on his forehead. The two men watched him in grave, half-pitying silence. His purpose had been an evil one, but it was part of his life, he had lived for it, and he suffered desperately.

He looked up from the paper, his face ashy with baffled fury. An oath dropped from his white lips.

"I ain't a-goin' to be done outen my revenge," he cried. "The gal may not be Mag Macks' daughter, but she was brung up as her daughter, she lived with Mag Macks for sixteen years. I'll tell 'em that, the Governor and his wife. I'll tell young Vincent he's married the gal he seen in the Dance Hall, the gal as was thought to be the daughter of a woman of the streets."

"No, you will not," declared Stanley, quietly.

"Whose goin' to stop me?"

Stanley moved a little nearer to him.

"I shall." He looked steadily into David's glaring eyes. "Before you do that, before you bring any shame or suffering to my child, I will kill you."

For a moment the two stood looking into each other's eyes. Then David turned slowly, and, with bowed head, went toward the door. As it closed upon him, Stanley drew a long, tense breath and turned to Charles Burk.

"Poor wretch, it went desperately hard with him!" said the latter. "But you need have no fear for your daughter's peace of mind. David Steele is beaten. He has given up his revenge."

"A strange Fate has proved too strong for him," declared Stanley.

The minister smiled. "Or the God of the innocent and the helpless," he said. "I hope that Florence knows that her child is happy," he added, in a low voice. As Stanley glanced at him questioningly, he said, "Yes, I loved her."

There was a moment's silence, then Charles Burk held out his hand to Stanley.

"Good-by," he said. "I am going back to India."

"We will not say good-by," Stanley said, "for I am going with you."

"Do you really mean it?" exclaimed Charles Burk, looking very much pleased.

Stanley gravely inclined his head.

"Yes, I am going to spend the rest of my life in trying to atone for the past," he said.

* * * * *

David Steele stood in the doorway of the house on the mountain side, his eyes fixed on the brown schoolhouse on the hill opposite. It was a day in December, bitterly cold, with flurries of snow in the air.

School was out, and the children were coming down the hill, uttering shouts of delight at the sight of the snow. These came faintly to the ears of the lonely watcher on the mountain.

A handsome carriage, drawn by a pair of beautifully matched horses, came up the mountain road. As it drew near to the house, the one occupant, a woman enveloped in costly furs, signaled for the coachman to stop.

"Wait here," she said to him, as she descended from the carriage.

She passed up the road. She stopped at the gate of the house on the mountain side, as her eyes fell upon the white headstone which marked the grave of John Steele, she read the inscription, aloud:

"John Steele. I Shall Not Forget."

The mountain folk had puzzled themselves over the meaning of those words, but the woman at the gate understood them. She opened the gate and went toward the house.

The silken rustle of her skirts caused David to turn. He looked at her calmly, evincing no surprise. If he had been prepared for her coming he could not have been more unmoved.

"You know why I have come here!" she exclaimed.

He nodded. "Yes. You've come to find out why I ain't done what I told you I war goin' to do," he replied apathetically.

"Yes, that is why I have come," she admitted. "I have been waiting for the blow to fall, but I have waited in vain. Governor Vincent and his wife adore their beautiful young daughter-in-law. They are very, very proud of her. The gubernatorial mansion radiates happiness." She paused, observing him closely. Her words failed to arouse him to any emotion. "Why have you given it up?" she exclaimed. "Or why do you delay? I tell you they are happy, happy!" her voice rang out passionately. Her eyes were a-glitter with the lust of hatred, of revenge, but they found no response in his dull, tired eyes.

"I had to give it up," he replied wearily.

"Why?" breathlessly.

"The gal tu'ned out not to be Mag Macks' daughter," he explained.

She stamped her dainty foot and clenched her hands in baffled fury.

"You fool! Why did you bungle?" she cried.

He continued to regard her unmoved. "It warn't no fault of mine that it went wrong," he said.

"How do you know the girl isn't the daughter of Mag Macks?" she asked.

"It's a long story, you'd better come in outen the cold," he replied.

She shook her head.

"No! Go on, tell me!" she cried.

In as few words as possible he told her. As she listened she looked past him to the brown schoolhouse on the hill. It was she who had sent Henry Vincent, the man she loved with all the intensity of a secretive, concentrative nature, and now hated as intensely as she had once loved, to the beautiful auburn-haired school-teacher. What an irony of Fate!

David Steel finished speaking and waited for her to speak. She aroused herself and looked at him a little wonderingly.

"You do not seem to care at all?" she said.

A faint smile crossed his lips. "It went mighty hard with me at fust," he declared dully. "But I've kinder got used to it now."

She flashed upon him a look of contempt.

"A man does not know how to hate!" she cried.

She turned and walked away from him.

He looked after her indifferently for a moment, then turned his eyes again to the hill opposite. The snow was falling rapidly, blotting out the schoolhouse.

The woman drew her furs closer about her and went back to her carriage, her face again inscrutable, her eyes unfathomable. The man, after a few minutes, went and stood by the lonely grave on which the snow was falling thickly.

"I reckon John understands that it warn't no fault of mine," he murmured, as he looked at the words on the headstone:

"I Shall Not Forget."

The End.

* * *

The Name, Please?

In the days gone by they had been sweethearts; but alas! hatred is ever akin to love, and the relationship had changed in this case.

One day the business lover had to make a business call on the girl's father and, of course, it so happened that she answered the door.

"I beg your pardon," said the young man, keeping his nerve in the trying circumstances remarkably well, "Miss Perkins, I think? Is your father in?"

"No, he's not. I'm sorry to say. Did you wish to see him personally?" asked the maiden, without the slightest sign of recognition showing in her eyes.

"Yes; but it will do tomorrow. Thank you. I will call again! Good afternoon!"

But this was too much. As he reached the bottom step the lady spoke: "Pardon me! Who shall I say called?"

* * *

Mad All Through.

An irate old lady, the wife of a prosperous farmer on the outskirts of Philadelphia, stepped off a train with a face like a thunder cloud. Any one could see in that scowling countenance the smoldering fire that might break forth at any minute. Stamping excitedly on the platform, she gnashed her teeth in a struggle to keep back her tears.

Finally she buttonholed the first person that would listen to her tale of woe.

"What's all this here talk of educating young men to be civil engineers?" she screeched indignantly.

"What we need in this country is more civil conductors and less sassy brakemen!"

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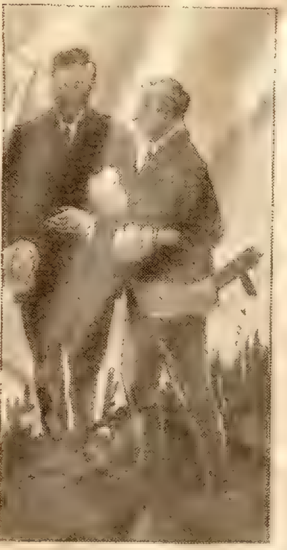

"You're too good a man."

P[illegible] 'that Spring [illegible] nd the little [illegible] can be picked up. Only thing they [illegible] n to know is that the telegrams were [illegible] s transmitted by an operator who [illegible] somewhere and signed the Clineville man's private signal. The Spring City manager, who himself received the two messages, states that the only thing out of the ordinary was the fact that the [illegible] nding seemed to have trouble [illegible] a perfect B, according to the Morse code."

"[illegible] noticed that," said the other. "What [illegible] the man who drew the ten thou[illegible]l at each bank?"

"Looked and dressed just like hundreds of other business men who are [illegible]omers of the W[illegible] [illegible] and the Third National. [illegible] not trace can be found of [illegible] James Long from the mom[illegible]ed from the door of the N[illegible] [illegible] days ago."

"Banks ought not to pay that much money on telegraphic orders where identification is waived," growled the other man picking up his paper.

"Right, and they are hard enough to do business with as a rule, too," said the man in gray. "This case, though, has interested me. I am a telegraph operator myself, and it amuses me to read how these detectives and reporters are scouting the idea of that letter B as a real clew. I know of any number of operators who cannot make some particular letter or figure exactly correct—couldn't if their lives hung on it. Take myself—I never could make a decent figure six; always add a couple dots. Funny thing that."

There was no answer, and the eyes of the other man remained fastened on the pages of his paper. With an aggrieved air the little man arose and sauntered back to his chair in the parlor [illegible]

"Wish that chap was sociable," he grumbled. "Seems to me I have known him somewhere. Not in the line of duty, though, I guess. Anyway, I am on vacation," and Martin Stedman leaned back, [illegible]lly dozing, as the Sunset Flyer sped swiftly southward.

In the smoking compartment the athletic, well-dressed stranger with the heavy beard smiled as he thoughtfully inspected his right hand.

"Seems to me," he muttered, "that if I were an operator and had a failing of that kind, I would learn to use the other hand."

It was in the early hours of the night, and the Sunset, pulled by the mighty 671, raced along, fairly flying around [illegible] curves as the track followed [illegible] bending of the Missouri [illegible] late, the en[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the terminal [illegible] time.

Not quite th[illegible] stations away No. 3, the northbound limited, was rushing along in an effort to make a station beyond their regular meeting point in the time given them by order No. 205. One station behind the Sunset, a pale-faced operator was frantically calling the stations between the two trains; trying to notify some operator who could flag and stop in the race to destruction one of the flying trains. A hopeless attempt it seemed, as all were small stations closed for the night. On the operator's table lay order 205 addressed to the Sunset Flyer. He had forgotten to throw his signal to red. Across the order lay his revolver. He did not intend to live to listen to the death list that would go over the wires if he failed to stop one of the trains.

"Hard to catch Jimmy," the bearded man had just murmured, with a drowsy, whimsical smile, when the crash came.

The 671 met her mighty sister, the 672, and both engines reared up and toppled over the embankment, taking with them a part of each train. Of the Flyer, the baggage and mail cars were caught and crushed like pasteboard by the impact and the weight of the heavy cars behind. One day coach was badly crushed; the other was telescoped by the parlor car, which spread death as it ground its way into the coach, and then, with one end of the car splintered by the sleeper in the rear, was wrenched over the edge, and turning twice, lay bottom up in the ditch.

With instant presence of mind the man in the smoking compartment had grasped the heavy iron and clung there as the car careened into the ditch. With the last plunge his hold was torn loose, but he dropped unhurt into the wreckage below, and proceeded to kick an opening through the window nearest him. From all about him [illegible] cries of [illegible] distress. Back n[illegible] the end [illegible] flames were already lic[illegible] at the fli[illegible] decorations and getting a grip on the woodwork. By the light of the flames he could see many not so fortunate as himself.

"[illegible] to the clear," the man mutt[illegible] [illegible]nly, and prepared to swing himself out of the window. Then—perhaps it was the training of his boyhood and early manhood, perhaps the cry of a child pinned below—the man who had thought only of self dropped back into what had been the roof of the car. Two men were fighting there, each striving to be the first to attempt the impossible feat of crawling through a ventilator window.

"[illegible] those women and children out of that window above, while I get an ax to knock away those timbers!" roared Jimmy, with an oath. "Hurry, or I'll kill you before the flames do!"

The men in that car were not cowards, and with a dominant spiri[illegible] [illegible] they became heroes. Half-s[illegible], they fought and held their own against the flames, until it seemed that all in whom a spark of life remained had been carried out. The fire was spreading over the greater part of the car when the last of the rescuers were stopped in their retreat to safety by a feeble cry from a part of the car they had thought tenanted only by the dead.

Jimmy was the only man to turn back. Down in the corner, where he had been hurled and pinned in by timbers, was the little man in gray. The natty sideburns and mustache had dropped off, and there was revealed a keen, smooth-shaven face.

"Detective Stedman, by the great cat!" exclaimed Jimmy.

Even in his pain and in the face of death itself, the little man grinned. "Jimmy the Wireless! Neat disguise you had. Thought I knew you. Couldn't place. Do you make a good B? You can't help me. Go on—I don't blame——"

Jimmy had indeed stepped away, but only to get a better swing for his blows. It was a brave fight. The ax swung steadily, cutting into the timbers, but the flames came even closer, and the heat and smoke were almost beyond human endurance. Stedman said no word, although as the advance guard of the fire [illegible] the woodwork above, burning [illegible] fell upon him. At that moment the [illegible] timber released its hold, and Jimmy swung the little man to his feet. How they ever got out of the burning car neither man can tell. Which man [illegible]ed the other at the last they do not [illegible], but some time later they found [illegible]lves lying back on the embank[illegible] into the raging pit of fire below.

[illegible] were burned and [illegible] hand bled pro[illegible] cut. All about [illegible] men and women suffering from [illegible] terrible injuries. No one seemed to have escaped unscathed. With his left hand Jimmy tried to assist the other in binding up his wounds.

A white-faced brakeman, one arm hanging helpless at his side, came running up the track, shouting for an operator.

"I am one," said Stedman, staggering to his feet.

"For God's sake come to the depot back here. The operator cannot be found and the helper is daffy with fright. Every minute may mean a life saved, if we can get doctors started here."

The pain of his wounds drove the little man white, and he groaned.

"Can you use your left, Jimmy? Your right and both of mine are useless."

For just a moment the other hesitated, glancing at the sufferers. Then he turned and ran toward the distant office.

Down at the office, Jimmy, whose left hand seemed to have all the cunning of most men's right, sought the key and made the needs of the situation clear to the dispatcher. Wrecking outfits with doctors and nurses aboard, were started and given right of way, and then followed messages and orders for the workers, and before he felt it safe to turn the key over to the helper the relief trains had arrived, followed by trains to which those able to continue their journey were to be transferred.

The dispatcher had not noticed that the relief operator at the little station did not make a perfect Morse B. One pair of ears had noted that fact, however, and they [illegible] to the little man in gray, who had followed and for a time stood close by the door.

"Guess that's evidence enough," he murmured.

Towards the southbound transfer train Jimmy made his way. His foot was on the step when some one touched his shoulder. Stedman stood beside him

"Jimmy," he said, "you really must learn to make a B as correctly with your left as with your right."

Jimmy the Wireless looke[illegible] his wounded hand. "I p[illegible] [illegible] little stutter with the key [illegible] until I couldn't make a perfect letter. Even you did not suspect my hand in the game after the manager told his story. Well," he added quietly, "do your duty, Stedman. You have tried for a long time to get me with the goods."

"I have no duty," said the detective. "Am just sending a message resigning my position. My only duty is to shake hands with you and ask you to go straight after this. You are too good a man, Jimmy, to throw yourself away in crime. Can't you cut it?"

[illegible] little man's [illegible] hand [illegible] own [illegible] a promise.

* * *

Small Humorists

One of the most embarras[illegible] tions in which I [illegible] Hilda Cowham, the [illegible] was caused by a nie[illegible] of mine whose father was a clergym[illegible] and whom I took to church for the [illegible] time. She did not in the least know [illegible]er father did, and for a long tim[illegible] not ob[illegible] him. But after sittir[illegible] for some time, hardly daring to ra[illegible] eyes because I told her she m[illegible] [illegible]t or she would not [illegible] to church again, she suddenly, in the middle of the sermon, looked up and saw him and [illegible] "Auntie, look, there's [illegible] up there! And whatever is he [illegible] about?"

Which reminds me of two little nephews of mine who were taken to a churchyard by a very old and pious aunt. She, thinking to impress the surroundings on them, said, "You know, Jack and Fred, it is only the body that lies here. Now, what part of him goes to Heaven?"

"His head, I suppose."

There are probably many mothers who have had cause to smile at the quaint additions which their children at times have made to their prayers. A little girl friend of mine was once taken to a ventriloquial entertainment, which impressed her very much. While saying her prayers that night she asked God to look after all her brothers and sisters and make her a good girl. Then there was a pause, and one heard, sotto voce, "All right."

* * *

Not as Expected

Young Mr. Charles was plainly embarrassed, and Miss Smith knew what was coming—or thought she did.

"Er—Miss Smith," he said feverishly, "could I—er—see your father for a moment or two?"

"Certainly, Mr. Charles!" And, excusing herself, she swept from the parlor.

Presently the old man came in, and, after a short conversation with Mr. Charles, he stepped to the door and summoned his daughter.

"It is getting late," said Mr. Charles, whose face was radiant, "and, as I have a long ride before me, I think I will say good night. Shall I find you at home on Wednesday evening, Miss Smith?"

Miss Smith assured him that he would, and Mr. Charles was soon en route for Clapham.

"Oh, papa," she began, "did he——"

"You must not ask questions," said the old man. "Mr. Charles wished to see me about a matter which, for the present, must remain a secret."

"I know, papa," pleaded the girl; "but you might give me just a little hint of what it was—just a word, papa?"

"Oh, well," he replied indulgently, "since you must know, Mr. Charles wanted to borrow a nickel to get home with!"

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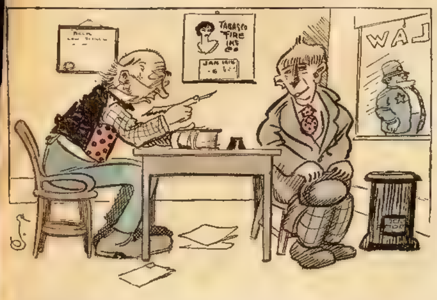


Village Lawyer—"You struck Si when he was lookin' the other way."
Client "Yes he was such a friend of mine I hated to have him see me do it."

His Little Slip.

A well-known business man, who lives in the suburbs and usually goes home by the five-thirty train, met a friend the other day, and was persuaded to remain in town for the evening and attend a smoker. He was at a loss for a moment how to square himself with his wife, but finally, going to the telegraph office, he wired:

Missed the five-thirty train. Do not keep dinner waiting. Will be home late."

It was a good deal later when he reached home, and his wife met him at the door.

"Did you get my message, dearest," he asked quickly, hoping to forestall the trouble.

"Yes," she replied in chilly accents "and I would like you to explain why you sent a wire at four-twenty-eight telling me you had missed the five-thirty train."

❦

Caught Him.

An amusing story was told recently at the annual meeting of the actors' orphanage fund by Sir J. Forbes-Robertson, who said that a sturdy youth once accosted Lady Bancroft with a long whining story. "Oh, lidy, won't you help me?" he said. "I'm only a poor orphan

Lady Bancroft, with her quick wit, looked up sharply and asked: "Where do your father and mother live?"

"Up this 'ere court, lidy," was the prompt response

❦

De Quote—"You know, a leopard cannot change its spots"

McFact—"But I never saw a leopard that seemed to worry about it.

Cause for Complaint.

A bookseller in New York purchased a lot of books at a sale Finding several sets of Charles Dickens' works in this stock, he decided to make a special price on them, so he put all of them in the large show window with the following sign in very large letters.

"Charles Dickens' Works All Week for Four Dollars."

An Italian who had drifted down that way walked up to this window Reading the sign, he said:

"Dese countree allee wrong Americana he work ze week, zee zix, one, two, tree, fo' five, zix—zix days fo' four dol'!"

❦

When the Music Ceased.

It is reported that a certain musician disgusted with the chattering that usually takes the place of listening during a musical performance, arranged with his violin, his violoncello, and the rest that the music should suddenly stop in the midst of the loudest passage in the piece

It was done, and, clear and distinct above all the loud talkers' voices, these words were heard: "We always fry ours in lard!"

❦

The Impolite Conductor.

The motor bus stopped and the conductor looked expectantly up the steps. But no one descended, and, at last he stalked up impatiently

" Ere, you," he said to a man on top, "don't you want Westminster Abbey?"

"Yes" was the reply.

"Well," retorted the conductor, "come down for it I can't bring it on the bus for you"

❦

He Was Honest.

Watchful Mother—"It looked very much as though young Mr Huggins was stealing a kiss when I saw your heads so close together."

Confiding Daughter—"I wouldn't put it that way. He may have thoughtlessly embezzled a few but I'm sure he'll repent and have them with him the next time he calls."

❦

Memory Exercise.

"I'll have to give up keeping a diary."

"What's the trouble?"

"I haven't the long memory necessary. I've spent two hours trying to think back and recall what has happened between now and the second of January"

The Cautious Scot.

A Scotchman went to a lawyer laid before him a legal question, and asked him if he could undertake the case

"Certainly," replied the lawyer "I will readily undertake the case. We're sure to win."

"So ye really think it's a good case?"

"Most decidedly, my dear sir. I am prepared to guarantee that you will secure a favorable verdict"

"Ah, weel. I'm much obliged tae ye, but I dinna think I'll go to law this time, for ye see the case I've laid before ye is my opponent's."

❦

Her Peculiarity.

"You must find that impediment in your speech rather inconvenient at times, Mr Briggs?"

"Oh, n-no; everybody has his little peculiarity. Stammering is m-m-mine. What is yours?"

"Well really, I am not aware that I have any'

"D-do you stir y-your tea with your right hand?"

'Why, yes of course."

"W-well that is y-your peculiarity; most p-people u-use a t-teaspoon."

❦

Very Visible.

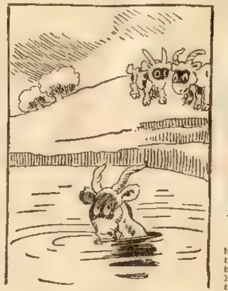
Judge—"Sambo, you are charged with being a vagrant; that is, with having no visible means of support."

Sambo—"No vis'ble means of suppoht, yo' honah? What yo' mean by vis'ble means of suppoht?"

Judge—"Visible means something that can be seen'

Sambo—"Dat so? Why lawdy, judge! Yo' jest send for mah wife, an' make her leave de washin' and come hyah. Vis'ble? Huh! She weighs 300 pounds. I guess she's vis'ble, all right."

❦



"Don't worry, boys,
Because I can't swim—
Just at a peck of corks
Before I fell in'

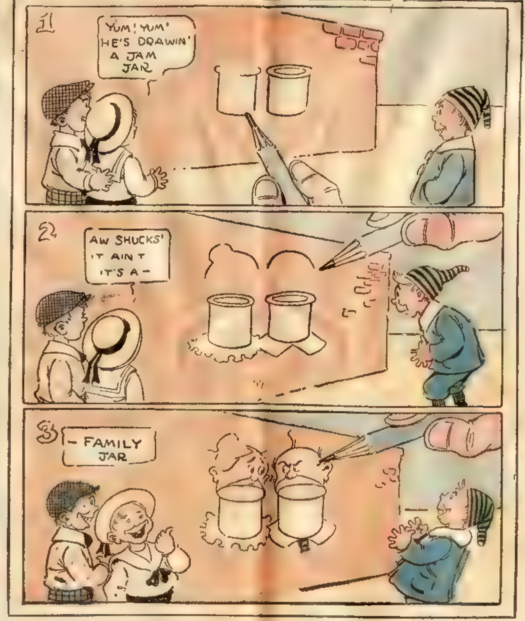
❦

Doubtful Pleasures.

In Concord, N H., they tell of an old chap who made his wife keep a cash account. Each week he would go over it, growling and grumbling On one such occasion he delivered himself of the following

Look here, Sarah; mustard plasters 50 cents; three teeth extracted, $2! There's $2 50 in one week spent for your own private pleasure Do you think I am made of money?"

ARTIST FOOLINGS


1
YUM! YUM! HE'S DRAWIN' A JAM JAR
2
AW SHUCKS! IT AIN'T IT'S A-
3
FAMILY JAR

A Fine Bird.

An Irishman who wasn't much of a hunter went out to hunt one day and the first thing he saw to shoot at was a bird sitting saucily on the top of a fence. He blazed away and then walked over to pick up the victim. What he happened to find there was a dead frog, which he raised at arm's length, looking at it with a puzzled air. Finally he remarked:

"Well, but ye was a deuce of a foine-looking bird befur Oi blew the fithers off o' ye'"

❦

Why He Remained.

"So your constituents objected to your absence from Washington?'

'Yes," explained the representative.

"Didn't you tell them that your vote was paired?"

"Yes; and they said that they would see to it that it was pared still more when I came up for re-election."

His Size.

Miss Jaggs—"Is he one of those chaps who would sooner be right than President?"

Mr. Raggs—"Oh, he is not so rigid as that; but I think he would sooner be right than Vice President.'

❦

Sure.

'Can you kill flies with moth balls?" asked the boob

"Yes," replied the wise guy, "but you've got to be able to throw straight."

Not Yet.

The politician said:

"There are some people who are too impatient and cynical over the matter of [illegible] They are like little Tommy

"'Pa,' said little Tommy, 'you know Jim and Horace? Well, pa, Jim and Horace say their prayers every night and ask God to make 'em good boys.'

"'How nice,' said the father. 'How very nice'

"'But He ain't done it yet, pa,' the urchin added"

❦

Had More Than Enough.

Tommy, having disposed of three helpings of sausage and doughnuts, sat mournfully regarding his empty plate

Observing his pensive expression, Aunt S[illegible] kindly asked: "Tommy, won't you have some more doughnuts

"No'm!" the poor lad replied with feeling emphasis, "I don't want them I got now!"

Sure of a Place.

Employment Agent—"Any recommendations from your last place?"

Applicant—"No."

"Where did you work last?"

"In a railroad restaurant."

Discharged?"

"Yes.'

"What for?"

"I made the coffee too strong, an' cut the meat too thick."

"Say! here's two dollars. Wait a few days, and I'll try to work you into my boarding-house"

❦

Didn't Know Him By Name.

A drill sergeant was drilling the recruit squad in the use of the rifle. Everything went smoothly until blank cartridges were distributed. The recruits were instructed to load their pieces and stand at the "ready," and then the sergeant gave the command

"Fire at will!"

Private Lunn was puzzled. He lowered his gun

"Which one is Will?" he asked.

❦

The Wisdom of Years.

Father—"Your income is small, and that girl hasn't a penny in her own right.'

Son—"That's true; but she has lots of rich relatives, who are sure to remember her"

Father—"That's the trouble They will visit you by the dozen, eat you out of house and home, and outlive you both in the end"

❦

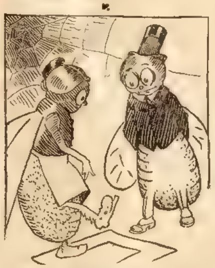
Tight Shoes.

Fair Customer—"I tell you that I wear a number two

Clerk—"But madam, this shoe that you just took off is a number four"

Fair Customer—"Yes, I know, but it has stretched horribly

❦



Mrs Fly—"Henry, I need a pair of shoes very badly'

Mr Fly—"All right, my dear, I'll take you to the shoo-fly's tomorrow"

❦

No Deception.

She—"You told me at the seaside that you were in business for yourself, and I find you a clerk in a store."

He—"I was in business for myself last summer. I peddled suspenders."

❦

Swallowing Abilities.

Jack-tar—"Ye mightn't believe it but whales have a very small mouth"

Landsman—"Yes, I've heard they wouldn't even be able to swallow half the stories that are told about them

Rastus—"Thieves stole Pete Possum's horse last night—the only clew they left was a quart bottle ob gin dat one ob dem dropped."

Alexander—"Oh, well, if Pete got a quart ob gin in exchange fo' dat horse, he quit a winner'"

A Coming Business Man.

"Ma," exclaimed young Teddy, bursting into the house, "Mrs. Johnson said she would give me a penny if I told her what you said about her."

"I never heard of such a thing!" said his mother indignantly " You're a very good boy not to have told! I wouldn't have her think I even mentioned her Here's an apple, sonny, for being such a wise little lad

"I should think I am, ma. When she showed me the penny, I told her that what you said was something awful and worth a dime at least"

❦

Wanted "Value Received."

"Ben," said the customer in the tonsorial parlor, "what are you doing? I fail to hear your scissors at work on my hair."

"But sir," the barber apologetically replied, "you see you have—ahem—you have very little hair on your head sir

"Well, what of it? I pay you my money, don't I?'

"Yes sir'

"Well then, rattle the scissors over the bald spot It's the only comfort I've got left'

❦

His Mother-in-Law Did It.

Friends—"So you and your wife have separated?'

Bouttown—"Yes. My mother-in-law is to blame. She was always making trouble between us'

"I shouldn't wonder."

"Yes, every time I told my wife anything that wasn't the exact truth that mother-in-law of m[illegible] it out and tell her"

❦

Close Figuring.

Mr. Veraciose—"Send out fo[illegible] black man to do the whitewashi[illegible] a white man to black the stoves

Mrs. V.—"Won't one man do?

Mr. V.—"No. I want to see how much material they waste"

❦

Its Meaning.

"What does it mean to cast your bread upon the waters?" asked the Sunday School teacher

"It means that the fishes has to be fed," replied small Sadie

The Professor's Theory.

Mrs. Bilkins—"Do you think it is worth while for my daughter to go on taking singing lessons? She has been at it for five years, and cannot sing yet."

Professor von Note—"Dit you expeed her to learn to zing? She vill neffer zing in zee vide vorld?"

"Then why didn't you say so long ago?"

"I thought you merely vanted to strengthen her lungs."

❦

Worth Going For.

Housekeeper—"Trying to get to Boston, eh?"

Tramp—"Yes, mum; an' if y'll give me a little to help me on me way——'

"Now, what do you expect to do when you get to Boston? Tell me that."

"I intend, mum, to call on Mr. Atkinson, an' git his recipe for livin' on ten cents a week."

❦

A Satisfactory Man.

New Man—"Here are some poetic contributions which came in today's mail. I am not up on poetry"

Editor—"Good! I don't want you to be up on it. I want you to be down on it'

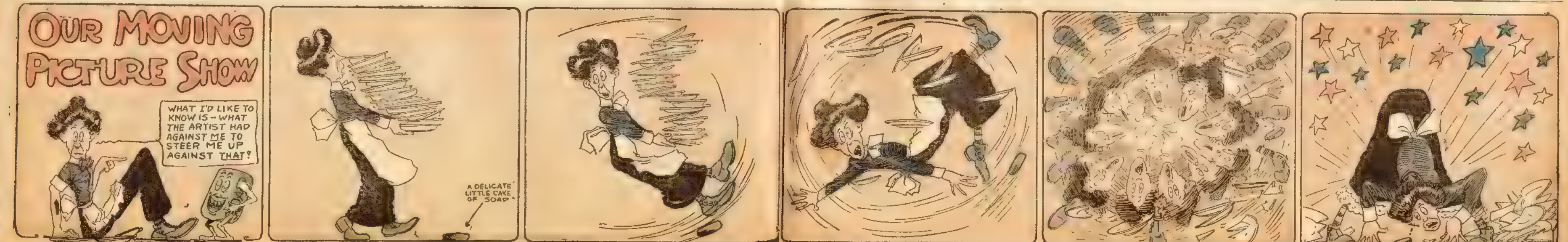
❦

Hobo—"What's my business? Oh, I'm a lightning calculator'

Woman—"On the stage?'

Hobo—"On de roads; dodgin automobiles.

HOW IT HAPPENED


OUR MOVING PICTURE SHOW
WHAT I'D LIKE TO KNOW IS—WHAT THE ARTIST HAD AGAINST ME TO STEER ME UP AGAINST THAT?
A DELICATE LITTLE CAKE OF SOAP

"The Missus do be tellin' me that if I break any more dishes she'll foire me——".

"Holy Ireland! it's a cake of soap I've stepped on!

Saints and snakes' where am I goin' to anyhow'

[illegible] I never stop fallin'"

'Blessed be, I've sthopped revolvin', but now I know I'll be foired from me job!"

The Cabalistic Hand

Or, Telltale Fingerprints - By George Ethelbert Walsh

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CHAPTER XIV.

EVEN Maxine was considerably shaken by the explosion of the lead pencil, which, I assumed, must have contained a stick of dynamite, and had been exploded by the scraping of the penknife against some fulminating mixture artfully concealed under the paper. There had been force enough in the explosive, whatever it was, to wreck a good part of the fireplace and office, and certainly had we held the pencil in our hands at the time it would have seriously injured or killed us outright.

Maxine gathered up a few scattered pieces of brick and tiles from the mantelpiece, but they crumbled in his hands. Here and there odd pieces of black ashes appeared; these he examined under a microscope, and shook his head.

"We'll never know what was in that pencil, Montague," he said. "Dynamite, or some more powerful explosive, probably. Anyway, it has left no trace of what it was composed of behind."

"It was altogether too narrow an escape to suit me," I replied, in a shaking voice. "He meant murder that time."

"Possibly, Montague—possibly! Certainly he warned us that his clews are easy to pick up, but always dangerous."

"If he leaves any more behind him," I said stoutly, "I'll chuck whatever it is in a pail of water."

"But, my dear Montague," blandly said Maxine, "that might be the very next trick he'd play on us. Realizing that we'd lose some of our nerve by this time, he might send us something that depended upon water to set it off. There are gases and deadly fumes that are released by contact with water. Perhaps that's our next danger."

"Then I'll take it to the river and throw it in there; I don't think he can blow that up or release enough gas or poisonous fumes to injure the whole city."

"No, perhaps not; but he knows we'd never do that."

"Why not?" I asked, bristling.

"Because we're not that kind, Montague. That would be a confession of cowardice and weakness. He would chuckle then at the idea he had frightened us off—baffled us. No, Montague, we've got to accept his challenges and follow out each clew to the end."

"They don't seem to lead anywhere," I replied irritably. "What have we done?"

"We have his fingerprints now—a complete set of the right hand," was the bland answer.

"And what good are they going to do us?"

Maxine shrugged his shoulders.

"I thought, Montague," he replied, a little sadly, "that you understand our profession better than that. What good is any clew? What do we know when we pick up a blood-stained lock of hair near a crime, or a strip of cloth left behind by the murderer? If we could foretell what each clew might mean in the end, there would be no need of much ability in ferreting out crime. Your stupidest patrolman on his beat could do the work that often balks wiser men. There would be no need of such men as you, Montague, for instance. Both of us would be without a mission in the world."

I winced under the words, but I was still too disturbed in mind to accept the situation philosophically.

"I'll admit the fingerprints are invaluable," I answered slowly, "if we can ever lay our hands or eyes on this mysterious person. But until we can do that, I don't see how they can help us?"

"You believe then, this—this mysterious personage can avoid us indefinitely? You think he can outwit us right along so we may never come to close quarters with him? You're of the impression we're no nearer cornering him than when we began?"

I shrugged my shoulders, and Maxine turned away sadly.

"If so, Montague, you pay him the biggest compliment ever paid to any man."

"Of course," I hastily added, wishing to show that I had not lost faith in his wonderful powers, "I know you will eventually triumph and overcome him, Maxine. I never doubted it from the first."

"Then why all this pother?"

I accepted the rebuke in silence and bit my lip. There was really nothing else to do than that calmly implied by Maxine's deductions. The master criminal, whoever he was, had to be followed and captured; we could not afford to confess defeat. The admission that there was a criminal who was greater and shrewder than the great Maxine, a man who could baffle and outwit the world's best detective and defy him to his face, would create a revolution in the underworld. Criminals of all kinds would flock to his leadership, and an orgy of crime would begin that had never had a parallel in human history. The whole order of society might be upset and revolutionized. Maxine in his dream of such a master criminal had clearly outlined what might happen to the civilized world.

"He would be a Napoleon of crime," he had explained, "but working always in the dark and hidden from the officers of the law, planning and directing and defying. Such a genius, Montague, could by the very force of his personality rally to his standard all the criminals of the two continents. He could organize and direct them so that all laws would be put at defiance. No man could ever feel safe under such a criminal outbreak until the master genius was overcome."

An echo of these words came to me now. I began to fear that Maxine's imaginative dream had a real basis of fact. If such a criminal should appear, would he not first direct his attack against the greatest master detective of the world? If he could defeat, baffle, and defy Maxine, how easy would it be to oppose Inspector McGonigl and his underlings? Perhaps his motive was to defeat and humiliate Maxine, and either drive him from the field or kill him in the process. Certainly the ingenious methods adopted so far were for a double purpose; first, to impress upon us the importance and personality of the man, and, second, to threaten us with death if we made a false move. Eternal vigilance was the price of success; it was also the price of life itself.

"Well," I said, with a sigh, after a long pause, "what do you intend to do now?"

"Follow up the clews we have so far picked up, Montague," Maxine replied, with a smile.

"And they are?"

"We must go to Mr. Seldon's and see how our enemy got out of the cellar. That will help us to eliminate one of our two theories about his presence there."

"Oh, yes, I'd forgotten that," I replied. "This explosion completely upset me. I remember we were going to Mr. Seldon's when this accident happened. Well, I'm ready."

"Got your nerve back, Montague?"

I flushed half angrily, but made no reply. I was satisfied, however, in knowing that the explosion had considerably disturbed Maxine's usually calm, imperturbable nature, and conscious of this I could afford to ignore the reflection on my own bravery.

When we reached the Seldon mansion, we found everything as quiet and undisturbed as the day before. The police still had the place under surveillance, but it was an idle and indifferent officer who watched in front of it. All the servants were held under suspicion, and they were not allowed to leave the house, but beyond that the watchfulness of the police was not very strict.

Most of our previous visits had been at night time, and we had experienced little difficulty in getting in the house unnoticed by the officer on guard. Maxine hesitated whether to make an attempt to elude the man or to greet him naturally and boldly enter. He decided on the latter course finally, and stopped a few minutes to talk with the officer.

"How are things progressing at headquarters?" he asked.

The officer shrugged his shoulders and replied:

"I don't know much about what they're doing, Mr. Maxine. They don't tell me everything; but I understand an important arrest is to be made shortly."

"I thought they had been making important arrests about every day," was the reply, delivered with a smile that robbed the implication of much of its sting.

"Well, sir," rubbing his [illegible], "as to that I can't say. Of course they make a lot of 'phony' arrests just to throw people off their guard."

"And to make the public think the police are doing something, eh, officer?"

The man blinked, but made no answer.

"Well, I'm going in to have a chat with Mr. Seldon about some private matters. I suppose he's at home?"

"He hasn't gone out yet," replied the officer, with a grin. Then he added, "The Inspector says you're on this case, too, Mr. Maxine."

"Does he?" asked Maxine, apparently surprised. "Well, tell the Inspector I'll give him every opportunity to distinguish himself. I won't interfere with any of his plans."

We left the police officer to masticate this mentally, and entered the house. Instead of inquiring for Mr. Seldon, Maxine greeted Parks and made his way to the basement. Our visits had become so frequent lately that Parks admitted us without a word. Somehow Maxine had managed to communicate to him that he was responsible for getting his release from headquarters, and in Parks we had a friend and pliable tool. His was a nature not to forget a kindness, and by the same token not to overlook or forgive an insult. To him the police appeared as his bitter enemies, and he would not aid them in any way.

Once inside the basement, Maxine's indifferent attitude deserted him; he became tense and alert. With eager anticipation in face and eyes, he stalked toward the trapdoor and [illegible] it. It was locked and the seals unbroken!

Maxine examined every one carefully to make sure they had not been removed and then replaced. He examined the powdered substance scattered around to see if there were any imprints of hands or feet. On hands and knees he went over every square inch of the floor within five feet of the door, and finding nothing to excite suspicion, he raised the door and renewed the examination inside. Every rung of the ladder had been carefully coated with a sticky substance. No man could ascend it without leaving some marks behind.

"He never escaped this way, Montague," he said finally.

"Perhaps he wasn't in the cellar, after all," I replied.

Maxine descended the ladder in silence and turned on the light. All was quiet and normal below. I followed him, closing the door softly after me, to make sure that no one was watching or listening from above.

"You're skeptical, Montague," Maxine said, after a pause. "Then tell me how this got here? Last night I dusted this corner carefully with powder. Now what do you see?"

I uttered an exclamation of surprise. Imprinted in the powder was the unmistakable impression of a whole hand, as if the owner had been searching around in the darkness for something and accidentally rested his weight on one palm. And the print was so unmistakably a duplicate of the one we had at the office that I stood in bewildered silence for some moments.

"You recognize it?" Maxine inquired.

I nodded affirmatively and grunted a reply.

"He was in this cellar last night after we left," Maxine said, straightening himself, "and he could not have entered or left by the only two visible ways of exit. The coal chute is out of the question, and the door was never opened. Then how did he get in and out, Montague?"

"Why, sir, there must be a secret passage somewhere."

"You have nothing else to suggest to explain the mystery, Montague?

"Why, no, sir! What else could I suggest? A man can't go through a stone wall or drop through the roof—that is, not unless he's a ghost."

"And neither of us takes much stock in ghosts, Montague. Well, it simplifies the problem for us."

"How? I don't see. I should think it made the mystery greater."

"It eliminates one theory, Montague, and it will give us more time to devote to the other."

"The finding of the secret passage, you mean?"

"If there is such a thing."

"There must be."

Maxine shrugged his shoulders and sniffed the stale, moldy air of the cellar.

"Is Miss Seldon in the basement above?" he asked in a whisper.

"No, sir, not that I know of. I'll see."

I opened the trap carefully and looked around. The basement was empty.

"We're alone, Maxine," I said

"It's very strange—very strange."

"What is strange?" I asked, a little impatiently.

"That odor, Montague. I told you I always associated the fragrance of the Cassiopeia plant with Miss Seldon. I smell it down here now."

Surprised by this announcement, I began sniffing the air; and now that my attention was directed to it I could detect the faint aromatic odor of the wonderful perfume, but it was mingled with the heavy, musty odor of the cellar so that it was difficult to distinguish it at once.

"But Miss Seldon isn't around," I protested, turning my eyes once more toward the trapdoor

"Couldn't by any possible means be in this cellar, Montague, could she?"

"Why, no, sir, not without our knowing it."

But in spite of my decisive words, turned and flashed the electric pocket lamp in every corner of the cellar. It revealed everything clearly—the grim, dirty floor, the moist stone walls, the pile of coal in one corner, a heap of old [illegible] and rubbish in another—but nothing that resembled a human being, much less the dainty figure of Dorothy Seldon. I laughed at my own suspicions, and said facetiously:

"Not here, Maxine, unless she's hiding under that pile of coal."

"I don't think Miss Dorothy would descend to that," he replied, with a wag of the head. Then frowning and screwing his eyes into a squint, he added:

"But that odor, Montague, what does it mean? It was surely not here yesterday. We must find out what it is. Perhaps some one has robbed Miss Dorothy of her perfume and stored it down here. A maid now——"

He stopped suddenly and held his head slantwise, his nostrils extended and eyes gleaming.

"It comes from this corner, Montague," he said. "It's very much stronger here

I sniffed the air and followed him. We were playing the old game of hot and cold; now we caught a strong whiff of the fragrance, and then it died away; but as we progressed we approached nearer the source of the wonderful odor. It gradually led us to the darkest corner of the cellar where a sort of pocket was formed by a bend in the sewer pipe, which turned sharply here and disap[illegible] the wall. Only a part of the [illegible] through the wall of [illegible]. A slight recess in [illegible] wall [illegible] elbow of the pipe [illegible] We had looked [illegible] times before, and had even crawled in the hole to examine minutely the wall and floor. But now, as Maxine directed his electric flashlight into it, he stood petrified, and then suddenly knelt and stuck his head far into the hole.

He had discovered something that I could not see, but the air in the corner was heavily laden with the odor of the Cassiopeia plant.

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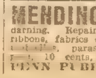

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CHAPTER XV.

AFTER an interval of several minutes, Maxine withdrew from the recess, backing out of the hole slowly and cautiously. He held something in his hands which he drew after him with infinite care and solicitude. When his head was finally clear of the elbow of sewer pipe, he straightened up and said:

"Montague, I didn't know that the Cassiopeia grew in cellars. May be this will save that trip to the upper Amazon to get a specimen."

"What is it?" I asked, staring stupidly at the thing he held in his hand

"Behold! the real thing—the genuine Cassiopeia! What luck, Montague! What a wonderfully fortunate find!"

It was an odd-looking plant, with thick fleshy leaves, and a dull, purplish flower, growing in an ordinary brickish-red flower pot. It was not a particularly attractive plant. Indeed, many of our ordinary potted plants were far more beautiful, and as for the single flower growing on the stalk it was no prettier than the flower of the common red geranium

But it was neither the plant nor the flower that drew our attention; it was the subtle fragrance emitted by it, filling the whole cellar. We had known the overpowering effect of that perfume before, and the discovery of the live plant that produced the fragrance completely intoxicated us.

"It is truly marvelous, Montague, that we should find this plant here," Maxine remarked after a pause.

"Probably Miss Dorothy hid it here so no one could find it," I suggested.

"Or it was stolen by some of the servants and kept here until he or she had an opportunity to smuggle it away."

But how did any servant get down here without breaking the lock or seals of the door?"

"True, Montague; very true! How did it get down here?

We stared at each other in silence. The same thought was disturbing our minds.

"Is it another trick of our enemy?" I asked finally, laughing uneasily.

Maxine shook his head. "Why should he want to steal this poor little plant from Miss Dorothy?" he murmured. "Perhaps he had nothing to do with it."

"More than likely he stole it to sell," I rejoined. "If he knew its value he would want to dispose of it."

"Yes; very strange," Maxine murmured, smelling of the plant again. "But I didn't know there was a single living plant of the Cassiopeia in this country. Miss Dorothy said nothing about it. I understood her father imported only the dried roots and stalk.

"They may be experimenting with it—trying to raise it in this country in pot form. Is it a plant that grows in the shade and darkness, Maxine?"

"Your question, Montague, raises a new and interesting line of thought, but I can't answer it. I know so little about the plant, except in a general way, that I must refrain from offering an answer."

"Many tropical plants thrive the best in the darkest parts of the forests," I added, following up my suggestion. "It's possible that this one was put here on that account. We might ask Miss Dorothy."

"Yes," absent-mindedly, "we might ask her."

Maxine placed his nose to the plant and inhaled once more the sweet, refreshing fragrance.

"Montague," he added after another pause, "I can imagine how the intoxicating fragrance of such a plant might tempt men to steal. I believe it has infected me. I'm going to commit a crime without compunction. I can't resist the temptation."

He drew a knife from his pocket and opened one of the blades

"If you don't want to be an accessory, Montague, I'd advise you to withdraw," he added whimsically, "for I'm going to commit theft."

Partly divining his meaning, I replied with a smile:

"You might steal the whole plant. No one would be the wiser."

"No, it would be too much like highway robbery. I'm going to take only a tiny slip of it for home culture.

He paused with the knife blade laid at one of the branches of the plant.

"I wonder if it grows from a slip," he said reflectively. "Perhaps it won't grow that way, and I would have all my work for nothing. If one commits robbery he wants some reward for it."

"It's a fleshy-leaved plant, Maxine, and most of that class can be easily propagated from slips."

"If it was an air-plant it would grow from a leaf or stalk or anything else. But apparently this doesn't belong to that species. I can't run any risk, Montague. I must have a root—a tiny little root that will grow."

With his fingers he cleared away the dirt at the bottom of the plant and exposed the tuber-like roots. They looked for all the world like small sweet potatoes, clustering together at the base of the plant and furnishing the stalks with nourishment stored up in them.

"This has been recently potted, Montague," Maxine remarked, examining the soil carefully. "The dirt is all fresh and recently put in the pot."

"I suppose Miss Seldon or her father repotted it after receiving it from South America"

"Yes, of course, that's it. The roots have not even taken hold of the soil yet See, the dirt falls away from them when you touch it."

I watched him pulverize a pinch of the dirt in his hand and blow it back in the pot.

"It isn't another trick of our invisible foe, is it, Maxine?" I asked in a whisper "You don't suppose now he can be here watching us?"

"Montague, you have the faculty of stirring up ghosts. I'd clean forgotten our enemy in my enthusiasm over our discovery. Now you summon him up out of the dark void and bring him before us to gloat over our predicament. Do you think he's here in the cellar?"

"No," I replied, ashamed of my own nervous fears, "but he has performed so many strange things lately that I'm suspicious of every thing. Perhaps you can find his fingerprints somewhere on the leaves of the plant."

"A good idea, Montague, but I've already looked for them, and they're not here."

"So you thought at first when you examined the lead pencil and the bomb"

"True, but I discovered them before we went far. Our mistake was in not heeding the warning. If we find fingerprints of the man here we'll know enough to stop. However, I see no sign of any."

"They were not in the dirt before you disturbed it?"

"No, Montague, I looked for them there. I suspected another trick, and there was nothing unusual in the dirt."

"Perhaps we may find them inside the leaves or flowers?" I suggested with a smile.

"I don't think even our wily foe could quite accomplish that feat and restore the leaves and flowers to their natural state. However, we will look for any split leaves."

Carefully and slowly he went over every leaf and flower, and then examined the stalks and stems of the plant, but there was nothing to indicate they had been tampered with. It was just a thrifty but odd-looking plant growing in a common flower pot, and if it had not been for its subtle perfume we might have cast it away and left it in the cellar.

"It must belong to Miss Dorothy," Maxine said finally. She's had it potted and put down here to grow. Evidently it roots better in a dark place."

"But how did she get it down here when the door was locked and sealed?" I asked, once more recalling the point that neither could explain.

Maxine put down the flowering plant and walked up and down the cellar in perplexed silence. This part of the problem was beyond him, and he frowned repeatedly and glanced up many times at the ceiling. The presence of the potted plant in the cellar was a mystery that neither could solve.

"It certainly looks strange, Montague," he said, after a lengthy silence. "I'm not sure but you are right; we ought not to fool with the plant. There's some subtle meaning to it that should be investigated."

"Better leave it where we found it," I said, conjuring up in my mind now all sorts of uncanny things.

"That may be the part of wisdom, Montague, but it does not appeal to me. In the first place, we should discover the reason for its presence here, and, second, I must take advantage of my opportunity to secure a root of this wonderful plant. Whatever else happens, I must do that"

"I wouldn't, Maxine!" I warned sharply.

"You believe it is some sort of a deadly weapon presented to us?"

"I don't know what it is," I replied, "but it looks suspicious to me."

"There can be only one thing then, Montague," Maxine replied suddenly. "If it is a deadly explosive, we will find it at the bottom of the pot. I see no fingerprints anywhere, and you must remember they were the hall marks we found on everything that our enemy sent to us. However, I will find out. Stand back, Montague!"

I jumped clean across the cellar as I saw Maxine grasp the plant by the stem

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and begin pulling it up by the roots. Momentarily expecting an explosion, I stood aghast and stammered.

"Don't! Don't, Maxine!"

But he continued to tug at the plant until the roots were loosened, and he lifted the plant easily from the pot. Nothing happened, and Maxine laughed softly at my fear.

"I'm not so reckless as you think," he said quietly. "Before I pulled it up, Montague, I ran my hand down through the soil and explored the bottom of the pot. There was nothing in it except the dirt and the roots. Now that we have the tubers exposed to view you can see that there's nothing to be afraid of. They're harmless roots, but very soft and pliable. They must be filled with the perfume of the plant. I believe the roots contain most of the essence of the perfume, held in a watery solution, each drop of which would be worth its weight in gold ten times over. I suppose I should be satisfied to take a few drops and cork them up, but I'm so greedy that I want a root of the plant to raise. Who knows, Montague, but we could make our fortune by propagating the Cassiopeia in this country? A dozen plants would yield several ounces of the perfume."

My fear was not entirely allayed by his words, and I was less interested in the prospects of making a fortune in raising perfumery for market than in the question whether some subtle danger lurked in the plant before us.

"I'd speak to Miss Dorothy about it, Maxine," I said anxiously. "She could tell you if the plant was harmless and how it got down here."

"Perhaps she could, Montague."

But as he made this rejoinder his eyes rested greedily upon the plant; it had taken such a strange hold on him that he could not easily forego the desire to slip off a root and surreptitiously take it. Once more he was toying with his penknife and turning the plant over and over as if to find the most likely place to snip off a root for propagation.

"If she can explain how the plant got down here, it will help us in the solution of the mystery," I continued.

"Yes, we will have to see her, Montague," still absent-mindedly. "If she knows anything about it we can—there, Montague, I could slip off that small root and she'd never know the difference. See"—pointing to one of the thick, fleshy tubers—"that should grow if potted at once."

He seemed so determined to have his prize that I answered impatiently.

"Well, hurry and slip it off. Then we can find Miss Dorothy, and ask her about its presence here."

"Ah, Montague, I'm glad you agree with me. Well, here goes. I'll snip it off so carefully and delicately that you'd never know it was dismembered."

"But the juice may run out and betray you."

"Yes, so it might. We may have to bandage it up somewhere. But it's a surgical operation that cannot be avoided. Have a little moistened dirt to clap over the wound if the juice does ooze out. Now Montague!"

He deftly inserted the keen-edged blade into the tuber and began cutting gently downward to sever the two roots. Maxine had the delicacy and precision of a surgeon, and could amputate an arm or leg, I believe, without spilling an unnecessary drop of blood. In becoming a detective, he deprived the profession of a first-class surgeon, and I now watched him eagerly as he performed this root operation.

I am at a loss to describe just what followed, for it came so suddenly and unexpectedly that I lost consciousness before I could fathom the mystery. I seemed to grow suddenly dizzy, with a stifling pain in the head and a tightening grip about the heart, and I coughed and gasped for breath; but before I lost my senses I was aware of a peculiar movement near me. I saw Maxine drop his knife and try to straighten up; and then he plunged forward in the most ludicrous way. In the next instant I was doing the same, falling across his prostrate form.

This highly interesting story will be continued in next week's Ledger. Do not miss reading it. A lot of great and timely stories will appear in the Ledger during the coming months. Send in your subscription and you will find yourself repaid ten times over.

* * *

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The Palace of Doom.

(Continued from page three.)

"She is booked for Siberia."

"No, no!" wailed the girl.

"Oh, you don't know our Semiramis," smiled Ivan, stroking her hair. "You don't know the sort of blood that runs through the veins of this crowned Pomeranian. Her mother sold her to the Czar, and she had him killed."

"Hush! You must not talk that way. Walls have ears."

"I'm not going to shout it on the parade ground," grinned the exile. "but it is true all the same I wonder if Paul knows."

"All Petersburg knows."

"Then he is not ignorant."

Ivan was silent for a moment. "Girl," he asked suddenly, "are there any guards in the rear of the palace?"

"I did not go behind it."

Panine walked over to the table and sat down. He drew writing materials toward him and began to write, closely watched by his companion.

"Here," said he, folding what he had written, "take this to the Countess Xenia."

"I'll do anything for you, Ivan."

"See that she gets it," he went on. "It is very important. Surrender the note to no one but Xenia"

"Yes, master."

Panine settled back in his chair and closed his eyes. Dreva hastened into the street. The snow was falling, and she felt the great white flakes on her cheeks. In another moment she was hurrying away.

It was not very far to the Carloff palace. Dreva dodged into a side street where the lights were obscured, and presently turned up in the rear of the Palace of Doom. In a few seconds she was near the stately edifice, and was about to mount a flight of steps when a hand gripped her arm. She drew back with a little shriek

A man had risen from among the shrubbery and was looking into her face.

"Unhand me!" cried the girl.

"What I catch I hold," laughed the man bearishly. "Everything is fish that comes into Alexi's n[illegible]

"But I am not a fish," hissed Dreva.

"You were going into the palace?"

"Yes."

"It is against the Empress's orders."

The girl was on the point of saying, "Hang the Empress!" but she bridled her tongue.

"Come, my pretty one," continued the spy. "What sort of message have you in your clothes?"

"I have no message," glibly lied the girl.

"Aye, but you have. Come, hand it over, pretty one

The long fingers seemed to sink into Dreva's arm. There was already a numbness between wrist and elbow.

"Unhand me!" she repeated. "It will cost you dearly if you do not. I am not helpless," and with this she whipped out a dagger from her garments and clutched it resolutely.

"Ho! would you sting, my little wasp?" grated the guard.

"Try me if you will!"

"Sting, then."

He jerked the girl toward him and seemed to devour her with his eyes. Goaded by the grip on her arm and the madness in the man's eyes, Dreva raised the dagger and struck with all her might. To her consternation she saw the man reel away, and the next moment he had fallen almost at her feet.

Dreva turned and ran up the steps. She pounded on the door, which was thrown open, and she rushed into the palace.

"Where is the Countess Xenia?" she cried to the servant against whom she nearly fell.

"Here I am," said a voice, and Dreva saw Xenia in the corridor staring at her with wide open eyes.

She ran forward with the dripping dagger still in her hand.

"I've killed the guard!" cried she

"Ursus?"

"Nay, the one in the rear of the palace."

"There was one there, then?"

"Yes, and he tried to stop me. Here is the letter," and Dreva produced Ivan's message. "I was to bring it to you at all hazards. I fear the man is quite dead."

Xenia without another word took the message and read it in the light that swung in the passage. Her eyes seemed to take on hope.

"It is too bad that you had to strike the spy," she said, turning to the breathless girl. "But it cannot be helped now. I thank you for the message——"

"I am called Dreva."

"And we are friends henceforth," smiled Xenia. "I will see to the wretch outside." She placed some rubies in Dreva's hand. "Now you can go back to Ivan. Tell him that I am safe—yet. But wait. I will go out and look at the man."

The beautiful Countess left the terrified girl and went out. In a few minutes she returned.

"Your dagger must have had eyes," said she, answering Dreva's look. "But never mind. He will never appear against you. It's a pity his name wasn't Ursus.

Dreva slipped away, stepping fearsomely over her victim, and disappeared. Xenia, breathing hard, went to the front door and opened it softly.

"Captain Ursus?" she called in low tones.

The big Cossack did not seem to hear her.

"Would you like a glass of wine? The night is chill."

At this the Cossack started.

"Come in," continued Xenia. Do you remember little Doska?"

There was a quick cry from the giant. He turned into the palace and Xenia shut the door.

"Ursus," said she, facing him and scrutinizing his hard face in the light, "what would you do for the man who saved little Doska's life?"

"But the man is dead," growled the Cossack.

"The man is not dead," said the Countess. "What would you do for his friend?"

Ursus's face softened. "I would do anything for that man!" cried he.

"Then he wants you to sleep at your post from half-past one to half-past two."

"When?"

"Tonight."

"I'll do it," said Ursus. "If it means Siberia I'll do it!"

This story, developing very thrilling happenings, will be continued in the Ledger issue of next week. If you are not a regular subscriber to the Ledger we would like to have your name on our list. The Ledger is only $1.00 per year; it is worth many times that amount Send in your subscription, for many great stories that you cannot afford to miss will appear during the coming year.

* * *

WHAT HAPPENED.

We dug a cave in our back yard,
And digging it was very hard.
We put a roof of boards on top,
So tight it wouldn't leak a drop
That night a storm came up at two,
The rain came down, a strong wind blew,
And when I looked, at break of day,
Our shanty roof had blown away,
And in that cave without a hood
A pool of dark brown water stood.
We'd left a cave and gone to bed
And woke to find a pond instead.
I think hereafter, if you please,
We'll build our houses in the trees.

* * *

Husbands' Gifts.

Mrs. Douglass drew out her sewing dubiously. She glanced at the delicate embroidery that Mrs. Swift was working and at the gauze for a waist on which Mrs. Horton was deftly sewing beads. Then she sighed deeply.

"I'll have to explain to you,' she said, "why I've got this atrocious waist to finish. It's a present."

All eyes turned to examine the work she held. It was rather heavy in texture and of a peculiar shade that was neither a yellow nor a tan, but bore a tint resembling dish towels. It was embroidered in brown silk, with stiff little vines of brown leaves running up the front like railroad tracks, and similar vines twining stiffly around the neck and cuffs.

"I could cry!" complained Mrs. Douglass. "You see, my husband came in all elated last night and announced that he had a present for me. He is the most horribly sensitive man you ever saw, so when he opened the package, though I almost screamed when I pictured myself in the dreadful thing, I had to rave over its alleged beauty to satisfy him. The worst of it is that he's so pleased he wants me to wear it to the theater tomorrow evening. So I've got to get it finished and wear it!"

"Oh, you poor dear!" Little Mrs Jones' voice was filled with pity and sympathy. "You'll be sorry.

"I know how he got that dreadful waist," went on Mrs. Jones. "My husband years ago was taken in by the same kind of agent. He brought me home what he thought a wonderful hand-embroidered waist direct from Armenia! I hated to hurt his feelings, for it was when we were first married, but I lived to regret the false enthusiasm I displayed to gratify him. For what do you think? The very next day he came in all smiles and said that as luck would have it he had run across the same man while he was visiting some other's man's office and he bought me three more waists!

"Then I plainly told him what I really thought of the horrid things. Since that time I have tried to educate him up to some slight knowledge of what's stylish in women's dress—and he's all over his hurt feelings. It had to be. I couldn't have endured any more such presents."

"That reminds me," said Mrs. Swift, "of the time my husband went East when we were very young. I had a friend whose husband always brought her things when he went on trips, and I was jealous. So I told my husband that I expected him to bring me a present. He said he would. So I waited anxiously for his return, imagining all sorts of lovely things. When he took out a big package from his suitcase I fairly trembled with eagerness to open it. What do you suppose! It was twenty yards of purple wool goods, for a dress! Purple of all colors! Why, purple in those days was regarded as a simply impossible color. I never asked him to bring me another present. I preferred the money; then I could choose what I wanted."

"My husband was just as bad," remarked Mrs. Horton. "He was crazy to surprise people. If I ever mentioned a thing I wanted I was sure not to get it; at least if I seemed to expect it. But one Christmas I was simply wild for a little French clock. I had looked at them so much and dreamed of them so often that it didn't seem as if there could be any other kind in the world. I couldn't help wishing out loud for one. Frank heard me, but he thought he'd surprise me the other way this time by actually giving me what I wanted.

"When Christmas morning came there at my place at breakfast was a big black walnut clock—the kind that you find in schoolrooms and kitchens! My heart stopped beating for a second and I could have cried [illegible] I had so wanted a little glass and gold French thing for my dainty room! He didn't remember what kind of clock I wanted, and he liked the solid clock, with a nice clear face and big hands, that made a good loud noise when it struck the horr."

"Did I ever tell you about the time my husband brought home a ferret, one of those dreadful little animals that bite and burrow in the ground?" asked Mrs. Tortman. "He bought the beast from a man who kept ferrets for hunting. Think of keeping a ferret in a little four-room flat. There we had that smelly animal for four whole months before I got up courage enough to say that I didn't love him too much to part with his company willingly! That ferret was a birthday present you know!"

Mrs. Douglass smiled woefully. "They're all dreadful," she conceded, "but you didn't have to wear your clock or your ferret or your purple dress! My husband believes that I was sincere in my praise of this waist, and I can't tell him now that I hate the thing! And to the theater!"

Mrs. Douglass dropped a tear on the waist, then glanced at the clock and hastened her stitches.

* * *

The Wrong Term.

Here is a story that was told by Senator William Hughes, of New Jersey, the other afternoon in demonstrating that when a man wants to express himself lucidly, he cannot be too careful in picking out the right brand of language.

One Sunday morning some time ago, according to the Senator, the parson of a small church in one of the back counties tenderly announced that he had received a call from another field. At the conclusion of the service the parson was approached by one of the deacons.

"I have been thinking about the announcement you made, parson," said the deacon. "Are they offering you any more money in that new field?"

"Oh, yes, brother," was the prompt rejoinder of the parson; "three hundred dollars."

"Well, I don't know that I blame you, parson," thoughtfully returned the deacon. "but in making the announcement you didn't use the right term. That isn't a 'call;' it's a 'raise.'"

* * *

For the Rhyme.

Robert W. Chambers, the novelist, was talking about a New York poet.

"His poetry is always awkward," Mr. Chambers said. "He drags in words that you can see are there solely for the sake of the rhyme. In fact, he reminds me of a Lake Sunapee epitaph.

"In a little churchyard, overlooking Lake Sunapee, a gray, mossy stone bears this inscription:

"'As sinks the sun with lengthened shadows,
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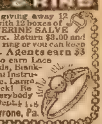

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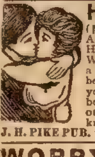

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COPIES WEEKLY.

GENTLE JABS

Men, like watches, are valued by their works.

To start things coming your way, go after them.

Success at poker depends on the way a man is raised.

We all want the bigger half, yet there is no such thing.

All the world looks down on a man who is in a hole.

He is truly a brave physician who takes his own medicine.

Marriage is a union that is responsible for a lot of strikes.

A girl with dimples will laugh at every fool thing a man says.

Pure food laws are not responsible for unadulterated nerve.

Too many people spend today what they hope to earn tomorrow

If you would hit the target of success you must aim before you shoot.

And many a young man looks upon a dollar saved as a good time lost.

Before burning your bridges behind you, be sure they are fully insured.

The man who marries to suit himself is easily suited—so his friends think

We always feel sorry for a woman who has an impediment in her speech.

Actions do not speak half as loud as written words in a breach of promise suit.

Ordinarily a woman manages to hold her own—with the exception of her tongue.

One may sometimes guess how a young man will turn out by noting the time he turns in.

Never attempt to borrow trouble; if you do, people will insist upon presenting it to you.

Fine feathers do not make fine birds, but many a man's clothes make him look like a jay.

If many people were to think before they speak they would forget what they were going to say.

Sometimes a woman listens to a man's talk so she will be ready to start in when he pauses for breath.

Do your share toward preventing this old world from becoming a howling wilderness by not howling.

It is difficult for any man to overlook the woman who has all the hair she wants piled on her head.

There was once a married man whose wife's folks didn't try to work him through her. She had no folks.

PEPPERS

Let the Others Pray.

Young Raymond had been busy all of the afternoon with his little pail and shovel on the beach. Bedtime came, and wearily he stood while his mother undressed him. Then prayers were next in order, and by that time he was almost in the land of nod.

"Now, be a good boy, dear, and say your prayers. Thank God for all His goodness to you." His head had fallen on her shoulder. "Raymond," she said sternly, as she shook him, "you cannot go to bed until you have thanked God for His blessings; for giving you a nice, comfortable home, and a lovely beach to play on, and a mother to love you. Think of the number of little boys tonight who are hungry and without a home and no nice clothes to wear, and——"

Here Raymond's interest became roused sufficiently to protest sleepily:

"Mother, I think them's th' fellers that ort to do th' prayin'."

The Wrong Fellow.

Samuel Gompers was giving it as his opinion that in exciting times people are apt to accuse the wrong man. It suggested to him the story about the young woman in Toledo.

This girl had been receiving now and then a young man who had never made love to her, but had admired her greatly. One evening, before the girl entered the parlor, her mother appeared and asked in a rough, stern tone of voice what his intentions were. Not having any intentions, the youth turned every color of the rainbow and succeeded in saying nothing. His suffering was ended by the entrance of the girl, who exclaimed:

"Mother! Mother! That is not the one."

Wanted to Be There.

Eddy, little Bobby's playmate, was asked by a motion picture company to pose for it. Later, when the picture was produced, Bobby went to see "him." Eddy played a thrilling role of escaping from the pantry with a glass of jam just before his "aunt" went in search of him.

Bobby sat through the show, eying his playmate a little jealously, and then every day that week found Bobby spending his nickel for a front seat.

The manager of the show, becoming curious, asked the reason, and Bobby replied:

"Some day that woman's gonna ketch im, an' I wanna see the fun."—Judge.

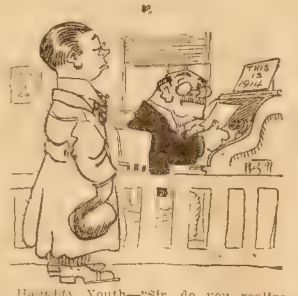
Unlike His Patients.

This incident is related of a Scotch doctor, new to the gun, who adventured upon a day's rabbit shooting:

Chased by the ferrets, bunny was a rather quick moving target, and the medico was not meeting with the success he anticipated.

"Hang it all, man!" he exclaimed impatiently to the keeper who accompanied him, "these beasts are too quick for me."

"Aye, doctor," the pawky keeper replied, "but ye surely didna expect them tae lie still like yer patients till ye kill them."



Haughty Youth—"Sir, do you realize I graduated from the Rabrah University?"

Business Man—"If I hire you I'll overlook that fact."

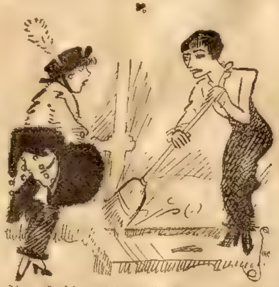
The Small Boy's Worry.

Two or three urchins were running down a long and steep flight of steps, when the foremost stumbled and fell head-long twenty to thirty feet, and was only stopped near the bottom by doubling backward around the newel post. It looked as though his back were broken, and that he was a dead small boy, but he gathered himself up, thrust his hands anxiously in his trousers pockets and ejaculated:

"B'gosh, I b'l'eve I lost a cent."

Reduction in Price.

The president of a Western college was spending some time in a large Eastern city. In order to study conditions in the city he occasionally took his meals in the poorer restaurants. One morning the waitress brought him some breakfast food that was wormy. He called her attention to the fact. The waitress said that she would go into the kitchen and see what could be done about it. In a few minutes she returned, and said: "Since the breakfast food is wormy, you may have it for five cents."



Mrs. Gadder—"Amanda Brown told Sue Perkins that I was a sneak and allers prying into other people's affairs."

Mrs. Blabber—"How do you know?"

Mrs. Gadder—"Heard 'em over the telephone. I always listen when them two cats is talking together."

Helping His Neighbor.

At a recent banquet William F. McCombs told of a conversation in a club in which several philanthropic personages were mentioned and lauded to the skies.

The conversation had gone to some length, Mr. McCoombs said, when a man who was sitting in a corner arose with a merry smile flitting over his features, and broke into the gabfest.

"Your philanthropists are all right," he remarked, "but I think it is only just that my next-door neighbor should be included in the kindly disposed bunch."

"We are willing to add him to the list," responded one of the others, "but is he really so generously inclined?"

"Well, I should say that he is," was the emphatic declaration of the first. "Dozens of tramps hammer at his back door, and I have never known him to send one away empty-handed."

"You don't mean it?" returned the second, a trifle incredulously.

"That's right," rejoined the first; "he always gives them a letter of introduction to me."

The Irate Farmer.

A man riding a wheel along a country road in late October dismounted, climbed a fence and picked up an apple from the ground. He stood eating it, when a farmer came along.

"Say, what're you doin' there?" the latter asked.

The man alarmed for the moment, apologized, and said he had picked the apple up from the ground.

"Waal," half snorted the farmer coming closer to the man, "don't you go doin' anything like that ag'in. Und'stand?"

"All right, sir," said the man. "But I thought it would be all right because I found the apple on the ground."

"Waal, that's jist it," cried the farmer. "Them apples on the ground is fur my hogs. If you want one, you pick it off the tree."

An Embarrassing Question.

The Youngs had dropped in unexpectedly upon the Baileys just as dinner was about to be served. Mother, who was somewhat disturbed, called Helen aside and explained that there would not be oysters enough to go round, and added: "Now, you and I will just have some of the broth. And please not make any fuss about it at the table."

Little Helen promised to be good and say nothing. But when the oysters were served, Helen discovered a small one that had been accidentally ladled up with her broth. She could not remember any instructions that covered this contingency, so, after studying the situation a while she held the oyster up as high as she could on her spoon and piped out.

"Mamma! mamma, shouldn't Mrs Young have this oyster, too?"

None of Hers.

A notable housekeeper of the past generation before the days of screens, had just announced with decision that she never had any flies.

"But, Aunt Augusta," faltered the timid visitor, "it seems to me that I saw a few in the diningroom."

"Oh, those," replied her aunt, with a majestic wave of the hand, "were the neighbors' flies. They will come in occasionally. But as I was saying, we never have any of our own."

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Jack Sewell's Fortunes

Or, Among the Pearl Islands

By St. George Rathborne

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CHAPTER VII.

THE STORM'S GRIP.

THE lanky Florida Key sailor lad was apparently pretty well up in the signs of the sea and the heavens, for ere noon had passed there were indications that pointed to the very change he prophesied.

The wind veered and came out from a new quarter; moreover, it was squally, and no longer hustled them vigorously along the course they wanted to pursue; but on the contrary, proved baffling, now favorable and suddenly changing into a head breeze that took them all aback.

Negrito shook his head, and hinted that it were better they begin to creep in toward the shore, so as to be ready for anything in the shape of a white squall that might be sprung upon them; for they were now in the region where these things were known to leap out of a smiling sea, taking unwary sailormen off their guard, and launching them upon a long voyage into eternity.

The boys were not at all averse to this change, for they could "smell bad weather in the offing," as Oscar put it, and this being out on the broad bosom of the ocean in a chip of a boat like the felucca, did not strike them either as safe or wise.

It was one thing to decide to head in, and quite another to make it, for the wind was contrary, and at times blew like fury from off shore, so that while the trim little vessel was [illegible] good in tacking, there were times when progress by this crablike [illegible] was mighty unsatisfactory, and this was one of them.

They kept pegging away [illegible] anxious glances at the [illegible] weather meanwhile, and [illegible] line to see what it [illegible] of an acceptable harbor.

The steam yacht had long since been lost to sight in the thickening haze, and the boys certainly envied the ability of the other craft to get wh[illegible] wanted her to be [illegible].

"Looks pretty [illegible]" shouted Jack, as they dr[illegible] enough to see what the s[illegible] was like. "And if the storm should [illegible] on us from the seaward, we'd be sharks' meat [illegible] no time. Those rocks would smash the boat into kindling wood. What's [illegible]t Negrito is saying—he seems to be pointing ahead?"

"'E says to look hat the hopening—[illegible]om hit hall, has sure has you live hit his a bally big pair hof jaws hover yon; and the bully Indian knows hall habout [illegible]m. Can you work the blimed boat through, hold cock? Hit'll be a bally [illegible]queak, Hi himagine, but hif hit can be [illegible]ne Hi do believe there's a rummy hold [illegible]rbor behind. Go hit, says Hi, hand 'it [illegible]or miss we're hin for a swim."

The old Mosquito chief knew the coast [illegible] a book, and it was to take advantage of this same opening that he had urged Jack to run in toward the shore.

With a decent breeze, or even a steady one from any quarter, Jack, being a good hand at this sort of work, would have thought it a joke to run the stanch little boat between those threatening [illegible] of land, and into the calm cove that lay behind their sheltering points; but with a shifting wind, at times ferocious and then suddenly dropping to a "whisper," the task was a ticklish one, to say the least.

However, there was literally nothing else they could do, and so Jack began to head in such a direction as to allow for certain puffs that were bound to throw them off their course. It all depended upon his judgment; if he made an error they would miss connections, and after that the game was all up, for it would be impossible to remedy the error; and besides the storm was just about to break.

Even so cool a customer as Oscar fairly held his breath as they made the last tack, and shot down toward the opening, which was now so close that they could even see the smooth water lying tantalizingly beyond.

Jack was not so worried over the possibility of being drowned as he was over [illegible] possible abandonment of the expedition in search of the pearl treasure-trove, when they had started with such glowing hopes. He set his teeth hard, and hung onto the rudder with a grim look on his face and his eyes glued upon the opening—though at the same time he saw the rush of the oncoming squall that tore up the sea just to the north.

If that hit them now they would be overwhelmed in a deluge of foamy water, and the unlucky felucca smashed against those cruel rocks.

It was a case of seconds, and a continuance of the favoring air current that was still wafting them toward the opening—seconds that seemed like hours just then; for none of them seemed to breathe as the crisis drew nearer and nearer, every eye being glued upon the inviting opening, or else the onrushing storm.

"We're going to make it!" shouted Jack, of a sudden, as he mentally calculated the speed with which they were advancing and the margin still separating them from the proposed harbor; and his words thrilled the Conch in a way he had seldom been affected before.

And they did! Just as the little black boat swept between those extended jaws, the swoop of the squall struck them; but it came a few seconds too late to lap them with its hot breath. They were safe behind that rampart of rock, and could defy old Boreas to do his worst.

Jack immediately brought the boat up with her head into the wind, for there was still some danger lest they be swamped by the ferocity of the blasts that found a chance to pass over the barrier that checked the fury of the waves.

Here in this snug harbor they passed the balance of the day and [illegible] the succeeding night; for the surface [illegible] was still troubled, and they [illegible] it better to rest.

Many surmises they hazarded concerning the fate of the other boat. The old fox, as Oscar denominated Senor Jose, was undoubtedly too wary to allow himself to be caught napping, and there could be no question as to his having sought a safe retreat long before the storm burst. Pearls might be all very good in their way, and highly desirable as articles of commerce; but after all a man had but one life, and if he lost that, all the gems in the world would not avail.

The only doubt that arose was as to the don having a competent pilot on board the modern steam yacht, one who was conversant with the intricacies of this unfrequented coast. Jack was willing to take his chances on the frail-looking felucca, with Negrito as guide, rather than to be on the splendid up-to-date yacht without his valuable aid.

When morning dawned the sea was smooth, save for a ground swell, and though Jack climbed the highest point of land within reach and swept the horizon with the telescope, he saw nothing of the other craft.

Once he thought he detected the yacht, for some low-lying moving object caught his vision; but upon focusing the glass upon the spot he soon came to the conclusion that it was only a line of brown pelicans swinging across the surface of the water in search of their morning meal.

In another quarter a gleam of white had caused him to pause for a second look, under the impression that it might be a sail of some sort; but in this case it turned out to be a lone sea gull flitting above the gentle waves.

So, when they made a start it was in a delicious state of uncertainty as to whether the storm had been a friend or a foe—if it had wrecked the craft of the hidalgo they could count it the former, for such an event would relieve them of all their worry.

Another day saw them well on their way. Progress was not quite so rapid as the impatient spirit of the young members of the expedition might have wished; but after all, they could find little to complain of when night again drew her sable shades around the felucca.

Jack was delighted with the way in which the boat sailed, and vowed that if the adventure panned out as well as [illegible] hoped, he would certainly have just such a charming little boat for his pleasure trips around the home he calculated to own near salt water.

A sailor seldom contemplates settling down on shore but what his first thought [illegible] in the line of the sea—it has been his bosom friend for years, he has watched its various moods from smiles to frowns, he has been carried safely around the globe upon its bosom, and he cannot look forward to ending the balance of his days away from its caressing touch.

Jack was still only a boy, but he had spent some years afloat, and entertained a strong fancy for the sea, so that his dreams of a future never failed to include a stretch of salt water.

There were no instruments aboard for taking a reckoning, and consequently they had to depend entirely upon the old Indian's familiarity with the coast to tell them where they were. After all, everything depended upon the chief, for without him the expedition could have neither head nor tail; for he alone carried in his keeping the secret that had lured them abroad upon this long chase into the great California gulf.

Two more days slipped past. From the anxious manner of Negrito it became apparent that they were now drawing near the goal. He showed more nervousness than the boys had ever seen him exhibit before, now scanning the sea for signs of the enemy, then again focusing his gaze upon the line of coast, as though picking up familiar landmarks that he had impressed on his memory, so as to find again the treasure-trove which many years back he had gazed upon in its secure hiding-place.

It was a time fraught with more or less anxiety to Jack, for he had pinned so much faith in the outcome that a disappointment now would be likely to depress his usually buoyant spirits severely for a time.

As for the light-hearted Conch, he allowed nothing to interfere with his enjoyment of the hour; what was the use in worrying when one had a stanch deck under his feet, plenty of good "grub" in the galley, and a clear sky overhead? So Oscar trolled his sea ditties, and danced his jigs from time to time in the exuberance of his high spirits; and Jack, more given to serious thought, realized that this jolly chap was just the right sort of a comrade for him, a foil to his occasional fits of the blues.

They were hugging the shore for several reasons, chief of which was the expressed desire of Negrito to see every mile of ground as they sailed along, lest by some inadvertence they miss the very landmarks for which he watched. And just as night drew on apace, when every moment Jack expected the chief to sing out that he had found [illegible], Oscar called his attention to a suspicious black smudge of smoke trailing [illegible] the southern horizon.

Immediately Jack trained the [illegible] upon the same. One look [illegible] and then gave a grunt that expressed disgust.

"Just our luck!" he exclaimed bitterly; "it's the yacht, without a doubt. The sly old fox has kept back until he was sure we must be close to the spoils, and now he pops up like a jack-in-the-box, ready to fight for the possession of the treasure."

"Well," said the other grimly, "'e hain't the honly 'un has can fight, hold cock!"

CHAPTER VIII.

AMONG REEFS AND ISLANDS.

SOMEHOW the words of homely Oscar put new heart into Jack Sewell. What the Conch said was true enough; they had come prepared to fight for the possession of the pearls if such became necessary, and the mere presence of the senor's yacht should not chill their ardor. So Jack's firm jaw became set, and his eyes glowed with sudden fire, as he turned and grasped the hand of his new chum.

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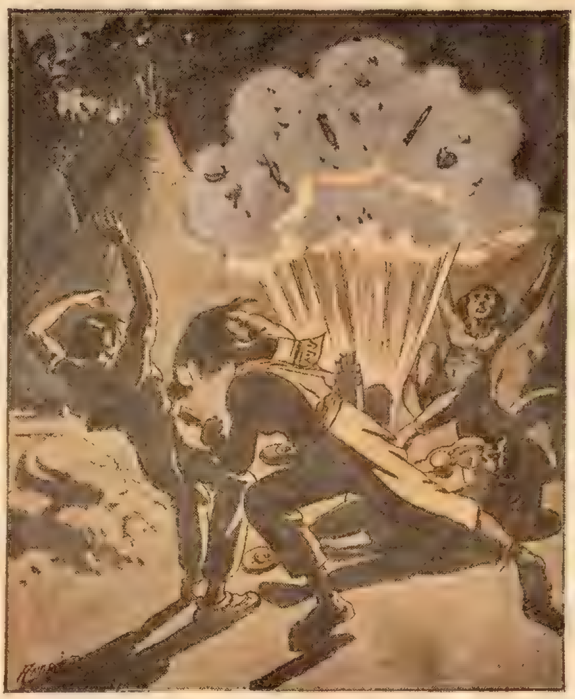

There was a tremendous explosion.

"Right you are, shipmate. They'll have to do some tall bucking before they ever lay hands on those pearls. Rather than let that old scoundrel get possession of them, I'd even throw the whole bunch into the deepest part of the gulf, and then laugh in his yellow face. But we'll fight like tigers before that happens," he declared.

Negrito heard what they said, and he looked pleased, for he was a fighting man himself, and nothing pleased his martial spirit more than the scent of battle in the air, or the shouts of combatants.

Besides, there was the fourth member of the party, the stout native whom Jack had dubbed Pedro, simply because his real name proved utterly unpronounceable. He had a ferocious way of handling that big musket of his, and promised to be a valuable chap in a pinch, always provided that he knew enough to aim his weapon at the enemy, and not allow it to go off when it bore upon his friends. Jack had long since had his suspicions as to the reliability of Pedro in [illegible] of an emergency, and resolved to keep a wary eye on him should there [illegible] occasion for a display of his [illegible] the fi[illegible].

The smoke [illegible] the [illegible] of the steam yacht [illegible] the [illegible] but they felt positive their presence must have ere this been made known to those on board the rival craft. The fact that [illegible] to the shore, [illegible] every rod of territory as they advanced, would put the old Senor Jose wise to the fact that they must be in the neighborhood of the precious deposit.

It was too bad that night could not have crept upon the scene before the yacht came into such close quarters. However, Jack was not in a humor to fret over what could not be helped.

Somewhat to the surprise of the boys Negrito ordered the boat anchored.

"He's struck a clew along here and perhaps tonight we'll have a chance to handle some of those jolly gems," said Jack to his chum, as they made all secure alow and aloft, after the mudhook had found a resting-place on the sandy bottom.

Oscar grinned and wagged his head in appreciation of the fact; for he was not in the least averse to indulging in the operation so pleasantly indicated by his comrade.

They could hardly have been more favored by nature, for the night was perfectly calm, hardly a breath of wind blowing as they sat down to their supper; and if, as they suspected, it was the chief's intention to paddle around among the reefs and little islands near which they had anchored, fortune seemed to be in their keeping so far as the weather was concerned.

Negrito was a cautious pilot. He proved it immediately upon anchoring, for his order went forth that not a light should be shown aboard to betray their position to the enemy. When the fat native prepared supper it was with the window of his galley hooded with a blanket, almost smothering the poor chap; and later on as they sat around the table in the main cabin below decks, the same precaution was observed. They were glad to extinguish the lamp, or as Oscar said, "douse the glim," and crawl out on deck for a breath of air.

The stars dotted the blue heavens, but it was very dark, the tender young moon having already disappeared behind the volcanic mountains that reared themselves along the coast of the great peninsula to the west. Ordinarily Jack while sitting there and looking up at the myriads of shining worlds would have been filled with wonder and awe, and would have amused himself with much vague speculation concerning the nature of these amazing things; but tonight he found no time for indulging in such fancies, since the emergency confronting them had in it enough of interest to engage his every thought.

He and Oscar had already each found a revolver among the weapons with which Negrito had so carefully stocked the felucca, and they made sure to hang these from their belts as they prepared to enter the small boat; for Negrito had already warned them that the hour was at hand for the climax of their expedition.

Pedro was to remain on board, and be constantly on the watch for their coming, ready to flash a light if they signaled; for some such assistance would in all probability be needed in order that they regain the vessel in the darkness. The old native saw no necessity for delaying their expedition, since every hour only increased the chances of the enemy coming upon them.

The rowboat had been put overboard, and was awaiting them. Negrito slipped a few things into it, being a wise old fellow who never liked to take extraordinary chances; and while it did not seem likely that they would be forced to put to sea in that frail craft, it might happen, and a little jug of fresh water at such a time must prove a godsend to the castaways.

He also carefully placed three guns aboard. They took up considerable of the precious room, for the boat was of small dimensions, but neither of the boys found reason to complain. If they were successful in their search, they would be in charge of the treasure-trove when on the return, and in case of trouble must be in condition to defend their find to the limit.

Silently they dropped into the boat. Negrito uttered a few guttural sentences to his vassal, doubtless giving the fat native last directions, and impressing upon him the necessity for keeping a careful lookout. Then the word was given, they pushed away from the felucca, and as the oars fell into the water with a regular though silent dip, the vessel was immediately blotted out from their view.

Negrito sat in the stern, holding a gun in his hands, and bending forward, the better to catch the first glimpse of the shore. It had been many years since the old chief found himself in this vicinity, and hence it necessitated constant vigilance on his part lest he should by means of a blunder upset all their calculations. But the memory of such a man is simply wonderful, and even the lapse of several decades could not eradicate the recollection of certain striking features in connection with his former visit to this coast.

It was with the utmost confidence, therefore, that Negrito directed the boys to head this way or that, as they began to navigate among the reefs and islands marking the shore. To Jack and Oscar it was bewildering.

They soon lost all idea of their bearings, and placed their whole dependence upon the man who sat calmly in the stern, his eagle gaze catching every projecting reef or point of land, and his quiet voice telling them to pull to the starboard or port, as the occasion demanded.

All was quiet immediately around them, though in places where the water was shallow they could hear the jumping mullet, and then a whirl as some larger fish, perhaps a red drum, or even the lordly tarpon darted among them, bent on a meal. The shores loomed up gloomy and forbidding, holding the mysteries of centuries in their grip; for the wonderful peninsula of Lower California is looked upon as a strange country, of unknown possibilities, and bathed in a halo of romance.

In and out they threaded the strange passages between the islands. An hour had elapsed since leaving the felucca, and even Jack, placing all the dependence he did upon the astonishing powers of the gaunt Indian, began to have serious doubts as to their ever being able to find their way back again to the vessel in the gloom of night.

Perhaps Negrito did not mean to attempt it. Perhaps it was the intention of the old fellow to lie by in one of the coves, after securing what he had come for, and await the dawn, when it would be easy to launch forth and run over to the anchored felucca.

Oscar had to forego even the luxury of a consoling pipe, which no doubt was a very great deprivation to the poor chap; but the serious nature of their errand would not admit of any chances being taken, and for once he had to play the hero.

"Stop!"

Negrito had evidently made a discovery, and they waited eagerly to see what it might signify. He was bending forward in his seat, and studying some features of the shadowy shore, so close at hand.

"Good!" they heard him say, and Jack's heart, which had seemed to stand still with anxiety, resumed its normal functions, with accelerated zeal.

Then it was all right, and he had not lost his bearings.

"Pull on, senors; but a little now, and we are there," said the chief, calmly.

Two minutes later he had them turn sharply to the left, and then the boat ran up a pebbly strand.

"We will go ashore now," declared the chief.

Accordingly they climbed out of the dingey, and stood upon the little beach.

If Jack felt a thrill pass over him it was not on account of the fact that [illegible] had landed upon the mysterious land of which so little was known among civilized peoples, but that the moment of [illegible] or failure was at hand. It would have been indeed strange if he had not felt unduly excited just about that time, with so much at stake.

Each of them picked up a gun, and Jack saw to it that the one he carried was the Marlin with which he had do[illegible] at the time [illegible] from the smugglers [illegible] Negrito und[illegible] a Government spy. That weapon had been a fetish in [illegible] of the Mosquito Coast Indian ever since, and he had come to believe that so long as he kept it in his possession no evil could claim him.

Jack had his own ideas about the [illegible], and was more inclined to think [illegible] would depend upon the [illegible] manipulated the Marlin, regardless of the shooting qualities of the gun.

They fell in behind the chief, in single file. First stalked Negrito, like a tall [illegible], then came Jack, trailing the rifle affectionately, for the feel of it was like contact with an old friend; and finally Oscar brought up the rear, also shouldering a weapon; only in his case it was a double-barreled shotgun that happened to be among the lot on board, and with which the Conch was more familiar than a rifle.

Ready for wild beasts or savage natives, they thus made their way into the chaparral that came down close to the shore, and which was so dense that only by following some sort of trail that the keen eyes of the Indian discerned even

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in the gloom, were they able to make progress.

And so the gurgle of the water on the beach was soon lost to their hearing.

CHAPTER IX.

THE HEAD HUNTERS' CAMP.

BOTH the boys wondered more than once why Negrito should insist upon such absolute silence in connection with their advance into this wild country, where, so far as they could discover, nothing seemed to exist, either human or in the shape of wild beasts. They found out the secret ere long, and had reason to thank Negrito for his abundant caution, which kept them from stumbling into serious trouble.

Having passed through the chaparral, they came to a wilderness of tumbledown rocks, that during some convulsion of nature had been hurled from the face of the mountain above. This seemed to be an ideal hiding-place for any sort of treasure, and Jack was positive that Negrito must have selected it for the depository of the pearls, at that time, long ago, when he first handled the argosy that had once been wrenched from piratical hands and secreted at another point.

They were gliding among these massive rocks, when the guide suddenly stopped and threw up his hand as a signal, which had been arranged beforehand. This meant that he had cause to anticipate danger.

Jack was puzzled, for he could not see what species of peril could hang over their heads here on this desolate shore, hundreds of miles from civilization, and with their only enemy, Senor Jose, afloat. It did not seem possible that the wily Mexican don could have had an inkling as to the real hiding-place of the pearls, and come ashore to intercept them as they put out their hands to clutch the prize.

Jack looked ahead, his attention suddenly attracted by what seemed to be a glimmer of light, as from a campfire. It penetrated the darkness above the rocks, but they were not in a position to look upon the fire itself until Negrito consented once more to begin a cautious advance, and after winding around several obstructions they could see a spectacle that gave them a thrill. Around a fire a dozen dusky figures were crouched, as though engaged in eating some sort of game which their prowess in the chase had brought down.

Never had Jack looked upon more repulsive creatures than those Indians of the peninsula, and he wondered whether they might not have come over from the notorious Tiburon Island, where it was said head hunters existed—a strange and horrible place which white men had tried in vain to penetrate and explore, every expedition up to date having been driven away by the natives, and bringing the most astonishing stories of the atrocious scenes which had met their eyes.

They were painted like fiends, and looked most grotesque as they moved around the leaping flames, like a lot of ferocious animals. An encounter with such a band of Indians was not to be lightly invited; and it was to be hoped that Negrito would think it wise to pass around the camp without arousing the suspicion of the natives. This was what Oscar whispered in the ear of his comrade, who had been engaged in a short but earnest conversation with the chief.

"That would be the best thing to do," said Jack, with a curious little chuckle "but, hang the luck, what d'ye expect's happened? Why, the blamed idiots have just gone and made their camp at the very spot where Negrito says he hid the jolly pearls so many years ago. What d'ye think of that for beastly luck?"

"Bloom the thing, say Hi! Hit's a case hof stumping back hagain to the boat, hor bustin' the blimed camp to smithereens. We can do hit, too, with these 'ere guns, bet your jolly hold life hon that, me boy," whispered the Conch, hoarsely.

Negrito laid a hand on his arm warningly, for he had seen one of the Indians cock his head up as though his keen ears had caught some sound that aroused his curiosity.

Jack had no stomach for a fight with these scoundrels. He supposed they were as tough as they looked, and perhaps deserved what they would get if they ran up against the modern firearms of the whites; but thus far in his young life he had never shot a man down, and the thought was not such as to give him pleasure. Was there no other way in which they might attain their ends?

Of course, they could hide and wait until the natives chose to depart in the morning; but that plan had many drawbacks, for who could say when they meant to quit their comfortable camp? And again, what of the clever argonauts who were at that very moment hovering somewhere close by upon the sea, with the intention of cutting our friends out of their legacy if it could be done by hook or crook?

But there was Negrito, the cunning pilot of the expedition. Surely he would be able to suggest some method of accomplishing their errand without such a waste of time and undertaking so great a risk. So Jack turned toward the gaunt figure crouching alongside, and waited patiently for his decision.

The fellow who had lifted his head to listen when Oscar was talking did not appear to be wholly satisfied, for, leaving the vicinity of the fire, he began to stalk toward the place where our three friends crouched in the gloom.

They lay their like logs, even while he came within ten feet of their hiding-place, and stood listening minute after minute. Indeed, Oscar, unable to stand the strain much longer, had about made up his mind that he would be compelled to leap up with a shout, when the Indian condescended to turn his back upon them and rejoin his fellows at the fire. If he but knew it, this was a fortunate thing for him, since Negrito had made ready to leap upon him with his knife, had he persisted in standing there but a minute longer.

The situation, however, had not been improved. How were they to secure the packet of pearls when these half-naked savages persisted in sticking to their camp, located in the one spot of all the neighborhood which our adventurers wished free from intruders?

Negrito was a schemer, and as he studied the situation he soon evolved a plan of campaign that promised some hope of relief.

"Both stay here, and move not until Negrito come again. Trust me, amigos, for I will not fail you. And be not surprised at what happens, no matter,' was what he said in the faintest whisper; for he did not wish to have that suspicious warrior come prowling around again, bent upon investigating.

Jack saw him fumbling some object he had taken from the folds of his garments, and which he had brought from the boat. It was not large, having less circumference than an orange, and seemed to be of considerable weight.

If Jack had chanced to be at Barcelona, in sunny Spain, just then, where anarchists abound, he would have immediately jumped to the conclusion that it was some sort of a bomb, but out in this far-away wilderness such a proposition did not appeal to him.

Negrito crawled away. He made not the slightest sound in so doing, and Jack was amazed at the wonderful skill shown by the old Indian. A snake in gliding past could not have moved with more

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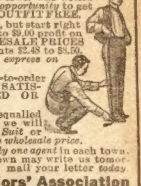

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This is a wonderful invention which will lighten the work of the housekeeper, save coal oil, give a better light, and please the whole family. Chores lose half their terrors if one of these burners makes your lantern give a bright light. Don't forget to say which size you want. Send $1.00 for a year's subscription to the Blade or Ledger (new or renewal) and get the burner you want absolutely free. We do not pay customs duties. Send at once.

W. D. BOYCE CO., 500 N. Dearborn Street, Chicago, Illinois

absolute silence. When he had vanished from their strained sight, the two boys could only lie in the spot where he had left them and await developments.

They fondled their weapons, and mentally calculated how many of the grotesque figures gathered around the blaze they could mow down should Negrito be discovered in his labors, and a fight follow. Thus again was Jack emboldened by the touch of the faithful little rifle that had in other days responded so readily to the demands he had made upon its shooting qualities.

Oscar would have tried to converse, but Jack, knowing the wishes of the chief in regard to this, would not allow it; so that they simply crouched there, with eyes glued upon the scene, counting the minutes that seemed to move on wings of lead.

Perhaps half an hour had gone—Jack could not be sure about this, though he tried counting the seconds for a while in order to find out something about the passage of time. Then he fancied he saw something move ever so slightly beyond the fire and the huddled figures of the Indian braves. Having eaten like gluttons, these unwholesome-looking worthies were now lying around as if perfectly satisfied not to move again while the darkness held.

Keeping his eyes fastened upon the spot, Jack soon saw another movement, and then an object slowly arose above the rock that lay about twenty feet from the fire. This object was the unmistakable head of a human being, and he could detect the well-known feather circlet that adorned the scalp of the gaunt chief. It was undoubtedly Negrito, who after much skillful work had been enabled to attain the spot he had selected as the object of his ambition.

Negrito had not taken such pains simply from a curiosity to get closer to the campfire, and perhaps admire the eccentric tattooing upon the greasy persons of those dozen fellows sprawled around the blaze. He had a mission to perform, and a message to send to these heathen of the peninsula that would not stand for delay.

Watching eagerly, and directing his comrade's attention by a clutch upon his sleeve, as well as a sibilant whisper, Jack saw the long arm of the chief raised on high as he drew it back. Then it shot forward, and some object fled straight out toward the circle of head hunters. There was a puff of sparks, as if something had disturbed the fire, and Negrito had fallen back behind the protecting rock.

Jack saw some of the Indians sit suddenly erect, as if wondering what had dropped into the blaze; but before a hand could be raised to start an investigation, what Jack was expecting happened.

There was a tremendous explosion, and the fire was scattered in every direction, with a magnificent display of sparks that excelled any fireworks Jack had ever watched. The entire circle of Indians seemed to be hurled back at the same time, arms and legs intermingled in a grand series of somersaults that lost none of their efficiency on account of being involuntary.

Crazed with fright, the wretches scrambled to their feet, gave one backward look of horror at the scene of the diabolical happening, which they judged was the angry voice of the thunder god whom they worshiped, and then fled like deer, the bruised and wounded stumbling along as best they could.

It was all over in ten seconds. Jack had not winked an eye, and yet what a change had taken place! There had been what seemed to be a peaceful camp, with a circle of aborigines lying around the fire; then came that crash, the uplifting of the red ashes, the flinging of human beings right and left, and now chaos!

Still he watched, for the most important part was yet to come; and straining his eyesight thus he was enabled to see a dusky figure slip around the rock, run swiftly forward, bend down near where the fire had been located, and begin to throw stones to the right and left with feverish haste.

He knew it was Negrito, and that he was working at the secret cache of the wonderful pearls; and Jack half arose in his eagerness, as he watched the chief turn away and jump toward the spot where he had left his young allies.

This story, developing very thrilling happenings, will be continued in the Ledger issue of next week. If you are not a regular subscriber to the Ledger we would like to have your name on our list. The Ledger is only $1.00 per year; it is worth many times that amount. Send in your subscription, for many great stories that you cannot afford to miss will appear during the coming year.

* * *

A Problem.

An affectionate father declares that natural depravity is well developed in his six-months-old infant, as he can prove by bitter experience. The other evening he was left alone with his tiny son and heir. The youngster's mother had gone to the theater. His aunt went out, also, and so did his nurse, and the man was left in full possession of the field.

About seven o'clock he began to rock his child to sleep. And he rocked and crooned and walked steadily from that time until nine. Then the infant, having finally succumbed to "nature's sweet restorer," he arose and, as if walking on eggs, carried his burden stealthily to its crib, put it down as gently as possible, and withdrew. Alas! however, in closing the door it squeaked a bit, and Mr. Baby was as wide awake as ever, and he remained as chirpy as a seventeen-year locust until his mother came home at eleven.

Next evening—and here's where the depravity comes in—mother was home, and auntie and all the rest of the family, so Mr. Baby went off to sleep at six o'clock, as usual, and even when he presently fell out of bed did not awaken.

Now the bewildered father is wondering why a baby who is aroused by the slightest creaking of a door one night, when his mother isn't home, fails to wake when he falls out of bed the next night. It is a rather difficult problem.

* * *

A Pie in Peril.

A Southern Congressman relates how when he was once making a campaign tour through the interior of Mississippi, he came upon a negro cabin, across the threshold of which lay a darky and a pickaninny of perhaps eight years of age.

The child was voraciously devouring a plate heaped high with chicken, vegetables, corn bread, and other bits of food in a manner, it was plainly to be seen, that commanded the elder negro's hearty admiration.

"Is that your child?" asked the Congressman.

"Yes, boss; he's shorely mine," answered the father, with a broad grin.

"He's got a pretty fair appetite," remarked the Congressman, after a moment's silence, during which the pickaninny finished the plate and produced a huge section of pie.

"Purty fair, boss; purty fair," said the father. "Jes' look at him goin' after dat pie!" Then, after a further period of silence, the proud parent added:

"Boss, it, ain't no use a-talkin', dat chile's got a pow'hful inflooence over food. Onct he gets his upper lip ovah a piece o' pie it's his pie, boss; it's his pie!"

* * *

Helping a Brother.

Suddenly the man with the chin beard, who was eating his luncheon in a restaurant, reached across the table, touched the button in the lapel of the coat worn by the man directly opposite him, and gave him the grip of the secret order to which they both belonged.

"Brother," he said, "I see you're in need, and to live up to my sworn duty I am compelled to——"

"In need!" interrupted the other in wide-eyed astonishment. "In need of what?"

"Of somebody to tell you that a knife is not the proper implement to use when you are eating corned beef hash."

By prompt action half a dozen waiters quelled the disturbance that began immediately, but they were too late to prevent the destruction of about ten dollars' worth of tableware.

* * *

Varied Tints.

In answer to Mr. S——'s advertisement for a laundress, Ellen, a darky, black as the ace of spades, applied for the work. With her was a group of small darkies, some black, some brown, and some yellow. Mrs. S—— asked if all these children were Ellen's. The latter replied:

"Yas'm, they's all mine."

"But, Ellen," said Mrs. S——, "they are all different colors."

"Yas'm; you see, it like dis: My first husband was black like me, my secon' was brown, an' the one I got now, he belongs to the fair sex."

Burlington Special

The New Triumphs
of Master Goldsmiths

The latest products of the craft. Exquisitely beautiful. Your own initials handsomely engraved on the superb gold strata case—guaranteed for 25 years. *The masterpiece of watch manufacture—19 jewels.* ***adjusted to the second—adjusted to positions—adjusted to temperatures—adjusted*** *to isochronism. Open face or hunting case, ladies' or gentlemen's sizes.* Direct to you at the rock-bottom price.

New Ideas
In Watch Cases

Newest Ideas: Inlay Enamel Monograms, Block and Ribbon Monograms, Diamond Set, Lodge, French Art and Dragon Designs, Etc., Etc.

Open face or hunting case, ladies' or gentlemen's 12 and 16 sizes.

Imagine a beautiful hunting case with your own monogram on one side and the emblem of your lodge or any other emblem on the other side. Our catalog shows complete illustrations.

The Movement

For the purpose of this sweeping *direct* offer the Burlington Watch Company selected its finest and highest grade watch. The 19 imported ruby and sapphire jewels represent maximum time keeping efficiency. The fact that 19 jewels gives the maximum, being known to every posted railroad man.

Needless to add that, after having engaged the highest grade of workmen from Europe, the makers of the watch didn't shun the comparative minor expense of getting the *very best* material for the *best* watch.

Adjusted to temperature *and* adjusted to isochronism *and* adjusted to positions—the Burlington watch is subjected to the most rigid tests—tests that require months after the watch is completed. Then after being fitted at the factory into its proper case, every Burlington watch is retimed so as to meet the ultimate standard of quality.

Special
A Remarkable Special Offer

The Superb Burlington Watch **now** at the *direct* rock-bottom price—the same price that **even the wholesale** jeweler must pay—and in order to encourage everybody to secure this watch at once, pay this rock-bottom price, either for cash or $2.50 a month on this great special offer! We send the watch on approval, **prepaid.** You risk absolutely nothing—you pay nothing, not one cent, unless you want this *exceptional* offer after seeing and thoroughly inspecting the watch. Read the coupon below.

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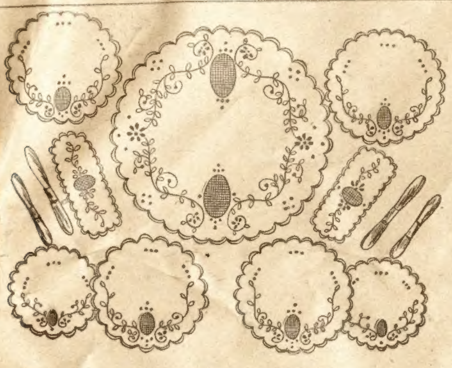
The LEDGER'S EMBROIDERY CORNER.

We call the attention of every woman to the beauty of the patterns displayed from week to week, and wish to impress upon each one the splendid quality of material that makes our offer a great bargain in every case. Every offer is complete. You can finish it up without buying anything extra.

These designs are already stamped on best quality cloth, and every set comes to you complete, exactly as described.

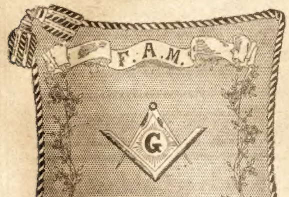
Every one of the designs we are going to offer is new and up-to-date, and nowhere else can you secure the same, as they are made exclusively for us.

You are sure to find many articles that you want if you watch the Ledger each week, and it is so easy to get them, every woman should have little trouble in getting almost every one.



No. 2, Stamped Luncheon Set.

NO. 2, STAMPED LUNCHEON SET.—This set comprises: 1 centerpiece stamped, size 13x13 inches; 4 doilies, stamped, each 5½x5½ inches; 2 doilies, stamped, each 4½x4½ inches; 2 napkin holders; 1 package needles; 1 stiletto; 10 skeins of C. C. embroidery cotton; 1 book of embroidery stitches by "Mme. DuParque." This entire set is stamped on linon, and will be sent absolutely free to any one who will send us $1.00 for a year's subscription (new or renewal) to the Blade or the Ledger. You can get this luncheon set without the paper by sending sixty-five cents.



No. 1,000, Fraternal Order Pillow Covers.

URIC ACID SOLVENT

50 Cent Bottle (32 Doses) FREE

Just because you start the day worried and tired, stiff legs and arms and muscles, an aching head, burning and bearing down pains in the back—worn out before the day begins, do not think you have to stay in that condition.

Be strong, well and vigorous, with no more pain from stiff joints, sore muscles, rheumatic suffering, aching back or kidney disease.

For any form of bladder trouble or weakness, its action is really wonderful. Those sufferers who are in and out of bed half a dozen times a night will appreciate the rest, comfort and strength this treatment gives.

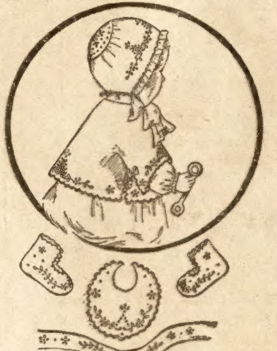
To prove the Williams Treatment conquers kidney and bladder diseases, rheumatism and all uric acid troubles, no matter how chronic or stubborn, if you have never used the Williams Treatment, we will give one 50c bottle (32 doses) free if you will cut out this notice and send it with your name and address, with 10c to help pay distribution expenses, to The Dr. D. A. Williams Company, Dept. 1863 P. O. Bldg., East Hampton, Conn. Send at once and you will receive by parcel post a regular 50c bottle, without charge and without incurring any obligations. One bottle only to an address.

NO. 1,000, FRATERNAL ORDER PILLOW COVERS—This is a sample pillow cover with the Masonic emblem. You can get a pillow cover for any of the fraternal orders such as Odd Fellows, Elks, Knights of Pythias, etc., by telling us which one you want.

This pillow is ready for use and need not be embroidered as the design is stamped in colors on art drill 22x22 inches. A back of the same material is included and colored floss for working. Send us $1.00 for a year's subscription (new or renewal) to the Blade or the Ledger and we will mail it to you free of charge.

NO. 8, CHILD'S SET.—The set we illustrate above and which we are offering our readers is one that should and will please every mother. A complete set for baby, consisting of cape, cap, bib, belt, and a pair of bootees all stamped on finest quality rep for punch work, and French embroidery.

Set as described sent free to any one who will send us $1.00 for a year's subscription (new or renewal) to either



No. 8, Child's Set.

the Blade or Ledger. You can get the child's set without the paper by sending fifty cents.

* * *

The Perfect Rose.

"Thou art like unto a flower," warbles the German poet to his love. A certain exasperated old German florist and nurseryman, who flourished half a century ago in New York, was accustomed to assert with equal positiveness that a flower is like a woman.

He had many women customers whose trade he appreciated, but whose demands often drove him to rumple his upstanding Teutonic brush of hair until he looked like an angry parrot. He finally unbosomed himself to the husband of one of them, whose diary has preserved his words.

"I have so much trouble with the ladies when they cooms in to buy mine rose! They wants him hardy, they wants him double, they wants him mundtly, they wants him fragrand, they wants him nice golor, they wants him eberytings in von rose. I hopes I am not what you calls one uncaliant man, but I have somedimes to say to that ladies, 'Madam, I never often sees that ladies that was peautiful, that was rich, that was good-tempered, that was young, that was indelligend, that was discreed, that was bervection in one ladies. I sees her mooch not!'"

* * *

Superior Clay.

The late Eugene Field, while on one of his lecturing tours, entered Philadelphia. There was some delay at the bridge over the Schuylkill River, and the humorist's attention was attracted by the turbid, coffee-colored stream flowing underneath. He asked the colored porter:

"Don't you people get your drinking water from this stream?"

"Yassir! Ain't got no yuther place to get it from 'cept th' Delaweah. Yassir!"

"I should think," said the humorist, "that you would be afraid to drink such water, especially as the seepage from the cemetery I see on the hill must drain directly into the river and pollute it."

"I reckon yo'-all doan' know Philadephy ve'y well, sah, aw you'd know dat's Laue'l Hill Cemetery!" said the son of Ham.

"Well, what of that?" asked Field.

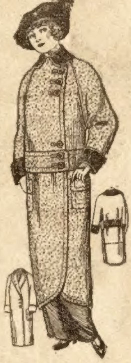
"Dat wattah doan' hu't us Philadephians none, sah," replied the native son. "W'y, mos' all of de folkses bu'ied theah aw f'om ouah ve'y best fam'lies!"

PATTERN COUPONS FREE!

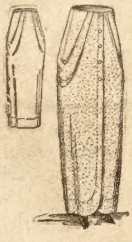
Hundreds of Patterns to Select From

The great difficulty in making one's own garments is to get suitable patterns. Our women readers could make many pretty and useful things for themselves and their children if they could get well-made patterns. We have arranged to give our readers a pattern service unexcelled.

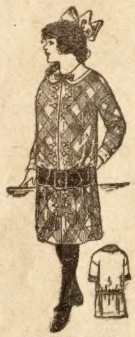
We make a splendid offer of the best and most fashionable patterns that can be produced by the greatest designers of New York and Paris, and what is more, these patterns will be within the reach of every one, and every one will have a wide selection to choose from. **Read our splendid Offer below.**



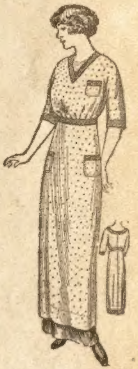
8134 Long or Three-Quarter Coat, 34 to 44 bust.



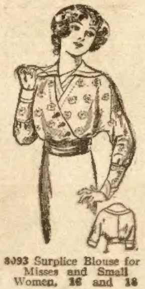
8133 Peg Top Skirt, 22 to 32 waist.



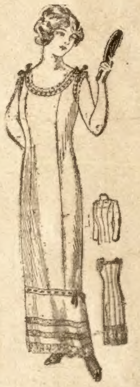
8101 Girl's Dress, 8 to 14 years.



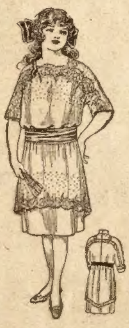
8131 Apron with Kimono Sleeves, Small 34 or 36, Medium 38 or 40, Large 42 or 44 bust.



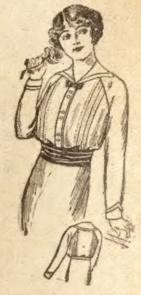
8093 Surplice Blouse for Misses and Small Women, 16 and 18 years.



8139 Semi-Princesse Slip, 34 to 44 bust.



8136 Girl's Dress, 10 to 14 years.



8132 Fancy Blouse, 34 to 44 bust.

HOW TO GET THE FREE PATTERNS

Here is the way we will do it. To every one who will send us one dollar for a year's subscription to The Chicago Ledger we will send absolutely free five pattern coupons. Each coupon will be good for one pattern and you can select the patterns from those illustrated in any issue of The Chicago Ledger. When you see a pattern that you like all you have to do is to send us a coupon and it will be sent to you at once. In this way you will have hundreds of patterns from which to pick the five that you will be entitled to, and you have all the time you need to pick out the ones you want.

These patterns are the best that can be made. Each pattern gives full directions for the cutting and making with information as to the amount of cloth required, etc., so that any one can make any of the designs illustrated with no trouble at all. At the same time, they are so stylish and accurately cut that dressmakers and seamstresses all over the country will be quick to take advantage of this liberal offer. Some will subscribe for two years so they can get ten coupons. These designs are made by the best designers and modists of New York and Paris, and are up-to-the-minute in fashion and beauty.

We treat old and new customers alike on this splendid offer. If you are already a subscriber, send in a dollar and we will send you the five pattern coupons and extend your subscription one year from the time it now expires.

To get these five coupons entitling you to five patterns, fill out the blank below and enclose it with one dollar for a year's subscription to The Chicago Ledger. Do this now—today! No woman should be without the Ledger's Pattern Coupon Book. Be among the thousands of women who will get these coupons.

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Enclosed please find one dollar for a year's subscription to The Chicago Ledger. This entitles me to **Five Pattern Coupons. Canada Subscription Price $1.50 per year.**

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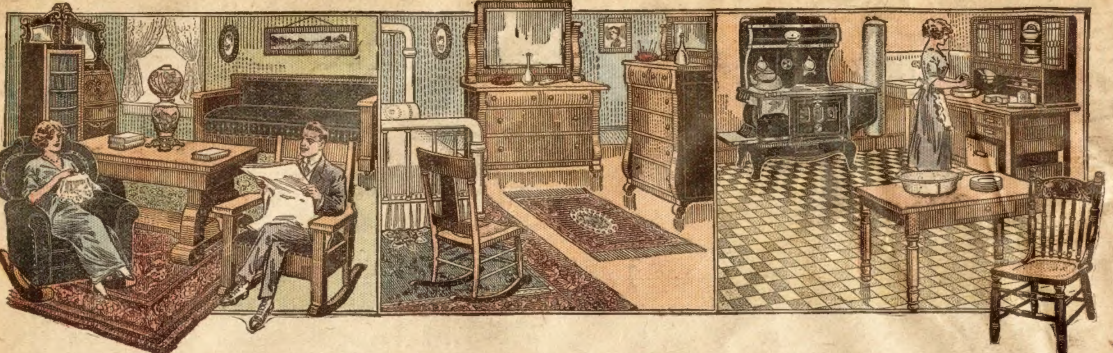
If you wish any pattern from those advertised in this issue, mark the number and size on the margin and we will retain a coupon for each pattern we send you when we send you the Coupon Book. (Order by size and number). **GOOD FOR ANY TIME.**



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Martha Lane Adams, our famous style expert, now has out her Book of 1,000 Spring Styles for Women. Every woman should have it. We give a year to pay. If you want this book check it in the coupon. Book also shows full line of dress goods.

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We also issue four other big catalogs, mentioned in the coupon below. Mark which you want. When we mail the books your credit card will go with them.

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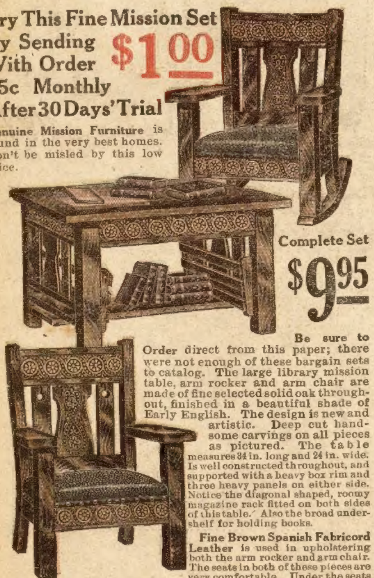

Genuine Mission Furniture is found in the very best homes. Don't be misled by this low price.

Complete Set

$9.95

Be sure to Order direct from this paper; there were not enough of these bargain sets to catalog. The large library mission table, arm rocker and arm chair are made of fine selected solid oak throughout, finished in a beautiful shade of Early English. The design is new and artistic. Deep cut handsome carvings on all pieces as pictured. The table measures 34 in. long and 24 in. wide. Is well constructed throughout, and supported with a heavy box rim and three heavy panels on either side. Notice the diagonal shaped, roomy magazine rack fitted on both sides of this table. Also the broad undershelf for holding books.

Fine Brown Spanish Fabricord Leather is used in upholstering both the arm rocker and arm chair. The seats in both of these pieces are very comfortable. Under the seats are oil-tempered springs, securely braced to the frame to prevent sagging. The rocker seat is 18 in. deep and 21½ in. wide. The back measures 21 in. from the top to seat. The arm chair is in exact keeping with arm rocker. Shipping weight, 125 pounds.

No. 22D4B100. Price, Table, Arm Rocker and Arm Chair.......................... **$9.95**

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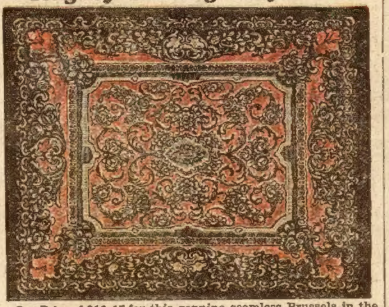

Our Price of $11.45 for this genuine seamless Brussels in the 9x12 ft. size will convince you of what savings you can make here. To get this bargain send only $1 with your order and if you keep it pay only 75c monthly.

Beautiful Floral Medallion Design is finely proportioned, brought out in a combination of red, tan and green colorings in a rich red ground. Colorings are guaranteed fast. Rug is woven of selected worsted yarns, well finished with high loop surface. Remember, rug is seamless.

No. D4C467, 9x12 ft. Price **$11.45**
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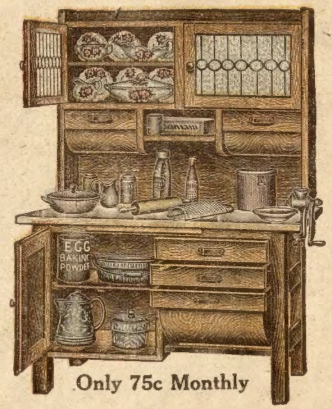
Spiegel, May, Stern Co

1359 W. 35th Street, Chicago

A Great Kitchen Cabinet At a Bargain Price $8.95



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Send Only $1.00 to get this cabinet in your home on 30 days' trial. Be sure to order from this paper as there were not enough to catalog. **The Design** is good to look at and made for the convenience of the housewife.

The Entire Front is made of selected oak, finished in a rich golden shade. Construction is first-class throughout. The back and drawer bottoms are built of good selected lumber, guaranteed not to warp or split. **Sanitary Base** measures 42 inches long and 26 inches wide, has clear white wood top, fitted with removable bread board; large cupboard with shelf and a 50-lb capacity flour bin as pictured. Also small drawers as pictured. Notice the fancy art-glass doors and roomy china closet section, two good sized sugar bins and large shelf in the top. Cabinet stands 65 inches high. Weight about 175 lbs. **No. 3D4B111.** Price..... **$8.95**